

# DOUBT IN AN AGE OF FAITH

# DISPUTATIO

## *Editorial Board*

Georgiana Donavin *Westminster College*  
Cary J. Nederman *Texas A&M University*  
Richard Utz *Western Michigan University*

Previously published volumes in this series are listed at the back of this book.

VOLUME 17

DOUBT IN AN AGE OF FAITH  
Uncertainty in the Long Twelfth Century

By

Sabina Flanagan



BREPOLS

## **British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Flanagan, Sabina, 1948-

Doubt in an age of faith : uncertainty in the long twelfth century. - (Disputatio ; v. 17)

1. Religious thought - Middle Ages, 600-1500

2. Civilization, Medieval - 12th century 3. Faith 4. Belief and doubt

I. Title

270.4

ISBN-13: 9782503527482

**© 2008, Brepols Publishers n.v., Turnhout, Belgium**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

D/2008/0095/167

ISBN: 978- 2-503-52748-2

Printed in the E.U. on acid-free paper

A. W.  
(1915–2007)



## CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgements	ix
List of Abbreviations	xi
Chapter 1: Sites and Soundings	1
Chapter 2: Secular Doubt	15
Chapter 3: Spiritual Doubt	57
Chapter 4: Discussions of the Nature of Doubt	91
Chapter 5: The Benefits of Doubt	125
Chapter 6: Disadvantages of Doubt	157
Chapter 7: A Commendation of Doubt?	185
Index	207





## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**T**his book is founded upon research undertaken while I was an Australian Research Council Fellow at the University of Melbourne, and later at the University of Adelaide, both of which provided congenial surroundings and accommodating libraries. I wish also to thank the Australian Research Council for their support of a topic which did not obviously appear to fit well with the national research priorities. I hope that one result will be to indicate how the past, even the medieval past, can speak to our present condition. In the course of my somewhat peripatetic endeavours, I was also able to enjoy the hospitality of the Duke Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and the History Department at Princeton, together with the libraries of these universities, as well as Cambridge University Library, the Bodleian and Taylorian at Oxford, the library of the University of Durham, the Warburg Institute and the Institute for Historical Research in London, and the libraries of the University of Toronto as well as a number of Australasian university libraries. I should like to thank the helpful staff in all these places for their assistance to a visiting researcher. The generosity of distant scholars whose interests are close to mine should also be acknowledged. I am most grateful to David Bell in Newfoundland, Rainer Berndt in Frankfurt am Main, Peter Dronke in Cambridge, Anne Clark in Vermont, Esther Cohen in Jerusalem, John Hudson in St Andrews, Henry Mayr-Harting and Alexander Murray in Oxford, and Anne Scott in Arizona for sending, or otherwise giving, me copies of their articles and books. Within Australia, I wish to thank Constant Mews, my closest colleague, both geographically and academically, whose readiness to share his erudition and enthusiasm with scholars and students alike is an example to us all. While the lot of an Australian medievalist has in the past been sometimes rather isolated, I should mention with appreciation the vibrant virtual community of medievalists which can now

flourish electronically via the Network for Early European Research (NEER) in addition to well-established conferences such as ANZAMEMS. Closer to hand, I am grateful for the confidence placed in me by my family, who never seemed to doubt that the project would one day be complete, even if I was not so sure.

Finally, I dedicate this book to my father, who schooled me in scepticism, but whose ability to appreciate the work has been sadly eclipsed by the time it took to write. ADRIANO IN UMBRIS.

Sabina Flanagan  
*1 December 2006*

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AASS</i>	<i>Acta sanctorum</i> , 68 vols (Antwerp: Brussels: Societé des Bollandistes, 1643–1940)
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966– )
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954– )
CFS	Cistercian Fathers Series (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1970– )
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1886– )
<i>Decretum</i>	<i>Corpus juris canonici</i> , I: <i>Decretum Magistri Gratiani</i> , II: <i>Decretalium collectiones</i> , ed. by A. Friedberg (1879–81; Graz: Akademische Druck, 1959)
<i>Epistolarium</i>	<i>Hildegardis Bingensis Epistolarium</i> , ed. by Lieven Van Acker, CCCM 91, 91A (1991, 1993)
<i>Giraldus, Opera</i>	<i>Giraldus Cambrensis Opera</i> , ed. by J. S. Brewer, J. F. Dimock and G.F. Warner, 8 vols, RS (1861–91)
Lombard, <i>Sententiae</i>	Peter Lombard, <i>Sententiae in iv libris distinctae</i> , ed. by I. Brady. Spicilegium Bonaventurianum 4–5 (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1971–81)

<i>Materials</i>	<i>Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury</i> , ed. by J. C. Robertson and J. B. Sheppard, RS 67, 7 vols (1875–85)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Hannover: Hahn, 1826– )
MGH SS	Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores (Hannover: Hahn, 1826– )
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
OMT	Oxford Medieval Texts [originally Nelson's Medieval Texts] (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–; with some volumes under the imprint of Oxford University Press)
<i>PA&amp;PV</i>	<i>Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénérable. Actes et mémoires du colloque international (Abbey de Cluny 2–9 juillet 1972)</i> (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1975)
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus [...]</i> <i>Series Latina</i> , ed. by Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris: Garnier, 1844–64)
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
RS	<i>Rerum britannicarum medii aevi scriptores</i> , Rolls Series, 251 vols (London: Longman and others, 1858–96)
<i>RTAM</i>	<i>Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale</i>
<i>SBO</i>	<i>Sancti Bernardi Opera</i> , 8 vols, ed. by J. Leclercq and H.-M. Rochais (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957–77)
SCh	Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Cerf, 1941– )
<i>Scivias</i>	<i>Hildegardis Bingensis Scivias</i> , ed. by Adelgundis Führkötter and Angela Carlevaris, CCCM 43, 43A (1978)

Southern, <i>Scholastic</i>	R. W. Southern, <i>Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe</i> , I: <i>Foundations</i> (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); II, <i>The Heroic Age</i> (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001)
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
Typologie	Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972– )
<i>Vita Roberti</i>	<i>Vita Venerabilis Roberti Herefordensis</i> , Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, MS 05088



## SITES AND SOUNDINGS

Uncertainty or doubt is often thought of as characteristic of the present day.<sup>1</sup> Thus modern doubts about how to behave are contrasted with the comfortable, but largely fictitious, guidelines of 'Victorian values', or what to believe with the supposedly spiritual certainties of an earlier 'Age of Faith'. But to any reasonably reflective person it should be clear that uncertainty is part of the human condition and how it is dealt with may cast interesting light both on individuals and the society in which they find themselves.

So it is odd that despite ongoing interest in medieval mentalities, when anger, laughter, wonder, fear and pain have all been studied, doubt has not been considered in any detail.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this is because the Middle Ages has so long been viewed as an 'Age of Faith' that few have thought to look for doubt there.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The phrase 'age of uncertainty' was made famous by John Kenneth Galbraith's BBC television series and book, *The Age of Uncertainty* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation / Deutsch, 1977). It has since been used or alluded to in numerous book titles, seminar series, articles, and debates, as a search of the Internet will show.

<sup>2</sup> *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Wonder', in *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone, 2001), pp. 37–75; *Fear and its Representations in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Anne Scott and Cynthia Kosso (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002); Jeannine Horowitz and Sophia Menache, *L'Humour en chaire: Le Rire dans l'Église médiévale*, Histoire et Société, 28 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994), which despite its title is largely about the use of humour in thirteenth-century preaching; Esther Cohen, 'The Animated Pain of the Body', *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), 36–68.

<sup>3</sup> See the remarks of Susan Reynolds in her perceptive article 'Social Mentalities and the Case of Medieval Scepticism', *TRHS*, ser. 6, 1 (1991), 21–41, especially p. 25 on 'the age of faith', although she is concerned more with religious 'unbelief' than 'uncertainty' in general.

However, my investigation of medieval doubt is not simply intended as a further contribution to the history of religious scepticism; rather, it aims to encompass uncertainty in all its forms. Because of the wide-ranging nature of my subject matter I have decided to concentrate on the twelfth century, or rather, what might be called ‘the long twelfth century’ since my examples are drawn from the period 1060–1230. Moreover, the twelfth century has for many years been recognized as a time of economic and social change and intellectual ferment, when the foundations of several modern institutions were being laid down. It is also the medieval period with which I am most familiar.

### *What Does ‘Doubt’ Mean?*

A further clarification is in order here. The word *doubt* in modern English is ambiguous, as indeed is its cognate *dubitare* in medieval Latin, the language of my sources. If someone is uncertain or doubtful about something, their mental state may be represented on a continuum. At one pole is acceptance of, or belief in, that something (let us call it a proposition for now). At the other pole is denial or disbelief. The doubter can occupy any position in between, up to, but not including, the limiting cases.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the position need not be fixed; it can move backwards and forwards along the scale. This sense of movement is better indicated by some of our English synonyms for *doubt*, such as ‘waver’, ‘vacillate’ and ‘fluctuate’, although there are a greater number of such metaphorical doubt-words in Latin, from which the last two are ultimately derived. Regrettably there does not seem to be an English cognate to the colourful *titubare*, the chief meaning of which is ‘to stagger drunkenly’.<sup>5</sup>

However, the principal meaning of doubt seems skewed towards the negative end of the continuum. If someone says she has doubts about *x*, or that she doubts *x* (where *x* is a proposition), this is not usually taken as meaning that she tends to believe *x*, but rather that she tends not to believe it. Once the person resolves her uncertainty and settles for either end of the scale, she can be said to believe or disbelieve, to assent to or reject the proposition, to affirm or deny it.<sup>6</sup> Thus Peter

<sup>4</sup> See Sabina Flanagan, ‘Lexicographic and Syntactic Explorations of Doubt in Twelfth-Century Latin Texts’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 27 (2001), 219–40.

<sup>5</sup> The English words *totter*, *titter*, and *teeter*, which look as if they might be candidates, are said by the OED to be variants of each other and given a conjectural Scandinavian etymology.

<sup>6</sup> Although philosophically these statements may have different implications I do not intend to canvass further the relationship between speech acts and states of consciousness. For an



Lombard (c. 1095–1160) wrote in his textbook of twelfth-century theology, describing the fall of Eve: ‘She who doubted, receded from affirmation and approached denial.’<sup>7</sup> What she doubted and eventually denied, at the suggestion of the serpent, was God’s assertion that eating the forbidden fruit would bring death.

### *Credulity*

Another reason for studying doubt in the Middle Ages is to examine the presumption that often goes along with the idea of the time as an ‘age of faith’: that medieval people were more credulous (‘superstitious’) and less rational than people today. What kinds of things did they believe and what did they question? How did they make up their minds as to the truth or reality of what we would see today as doubtful? What, indeed, are we to make of the following case? The *Vita B. Hermanni Josephi von Steinfeld* was written early in the thirteenth century by a member of that house to honour his recently deceased fellow canon, Hermann, who was endowed with various saintly gifts.<sup>8</sup> The narrator is at pains to show that he is nobody’s fool and often indicates how he has weighed the sources of his account, including information which he gained directly from Hermann himself. At one point he describes his doubts about Hermann’s version of how he composed the music for a song in honour of the Eleven Thousand Virgins.<sup>9</sup>

Hermann had said that while he was lying in bed worrying about how to set his words to music he was visited by a small detachment from the virginal throng who performed the song for him. Yet the narrator’s doubts did not arise from scepticism regarding such a visitation, but doubt that anyone could reproduce

introduction to the ongoing debates on the topic see L. Jonathan Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). I shall only make such distinctions where my medieval subjects seem to be aware of them.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Quae igitur dubitavit, ab affirmante recessit et neganti appropinquavit’: Lombard, *Sententiae*, bk 2, dist. 21, chap. 5, p. 406. All translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

<sup>8</sup> For more on Hermann’s natural and supernatural accomplishments see my ‘Biography from Hagiography? The Case of *The Life of the Blessed Hermann Joseph of Steinfeld*’, in *Living History: Essays on History as Biography*, ed. by Susan Magarey and Kerrie Round (Adelaide: Australian Humanities Press, 2005), pp. 5–21.

<sup>9</sup> The eleven thousand virginal companions of St Ursula, supposedly martyred by the Huns at Cologne, loom large in many hagiographies of the time. See further pp. 26–27.

what had been sung to them only once.<sup>10</sup> Hermann had a perfectly reasonable rejoinder to this. He explained,

As many times as it happened that I forgot their song and committed to writing other notes than those I had heard, again and again, returning many times, they did not cease to repeat those notes which I had forgotten for as long and as often as it took me to imprint them on my memory and to expunge any error and to commit wholly to writing what they had taught.<sup>11</sup>

### *From Doubt to Dissent and Beyond*

Such doubts, *mutatis mutandis*, form the small change of everyday life. But if, on the other hand, the proposition in question happened to be an article of faith, then uncertainty which resulted in dissent, if it became known, could trigger the repressive mechanisms of the church and state which were developed in response to such challenges.<sup>12</sup> Scholars who have concentrated on this phenomenon and have accordingly characterized the time as one of dissent and persecution have also neglected the middle ground of uncertainty. By studying how such uncertainty was experienced, expressed, examined, and in some cases resolved, I hope to restore a sense of complexity and depth to our understanding of the time.

Finally, examining attitudes to doubt, particularly its status within the intellectual programme of the twelfth century, may have some bearing on our current condition. For example, one large question, originally raised by Gavin Langmuir, is concerned with the relationship between doubt and anti-Semitism.<sup>13</sup> In a wider sense, such a study of doubt raises questions of toleration, and of fundamentalism, of authoritarian and libertarian attitudes to enquiry — in short, the problem of open and closed minds which is still very much with us today.

<sup>10</sup> See *Vita B. Hermannii Josephi*, in *AASS, Apr. I*, pp. 683–711; chap. 29, p. 698.

<sup>11</sup> 'Quotiescumque me illarum concentum contigit oblivisci, et mandare scripturae notas alias quam audieram; illae super me iterum et iterum et multis vicibus redeuntes, illas notas, quas oblivioni tradideram, tamdiu et toties repetere minime destiterunt, donec meae perfecte imprimerentur memoriae, et meum errorem abraderem, et scripto, quod ipsae docuerant, integre commendarem': *Vita B. Hermannii Josephi*, chap. 29, p. 694.

<sup>12</sup> See for example, R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> Langmuir is best known for his books *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990) and *History, Religion and Antisemitism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

### *Method of Approach*

I began with the idea that doubt was more prevalent in the period than historians had generally recognized. This was prompted originally by my studies of Hildegard von Bingen and the legend of St Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins. The implausibility of this tale, which presented the maidens' pilgrimage to Rome and martyrdom by the Huns at Cologne as historical fact, had troubled even some of its medieval redactors. Indeed, part of the rewriting of the story in the twelfth century was in response to what were seen as intrinsic (and extrinsic in the case of the discovery of the supposed bones of the martyrs at Cologne) challenges to its credibility.<sup>14</sup>

But how might a systematic study of such an unstable concept as uncertainty be made? Obviously a quantitative survey was out of the question, even given the relatively small number of surviving texts compared with those of more recent times. So the answer seemed to be to go for quality, rather than quantity: in other words, to study selected instances of doubt in the light of certain hypotheses, some of which I had already formulated and some of which arose in the course of my study. Since evidence for doubt in the world of the twelfth century has to be filtered through a variety of texts, I wondered, for example, whether some kinds of writing dealt with doubt more than others?<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, did different genres treat doubt and its resolution in different ways? Were different types of doubt related to different sorts of texts? And finally, since many of the texts under consideration were written by known individuals, how might their lives and circumstances have influenced their doubt, or their writing about doubt?

<sup>14</sup> See Wilhelm Levison, *Das Werden der Ursula-Legende*, Sonderausgabe aus Heft 132 der Bonner Jahrbücher (Cologne: Ahn, 1928).

<sup>15</sup> I concentrate on written texts, since pictorial evidence for doubt is hard to come by, or hard to interpret. As for material objects, the only example that comes to mind is the ambiguous case of Bishop Eorpwald in Angus Wilson's *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958). But this is a novel and besides, the evidence was faked. The example of the Danish soapstone mould for casting both Thor's hammer and two Christian crosses pictured in Bent Rying, *Danish in the South and the North*, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1981–88), I, 105, probably represents an economic opportunity in a not totally Christianized society rather than an indication of uncertainty of confession.

## Classifications

In order to make sense of these questions we need to be able to classify, or at least differentiate: (1) different types of doubt and (2) the different kinds of writing in which they occur. In the case of the second issue, that of taxonomy, the *Typologie of the Sources of the Western Middle Ages* appeared as if it might be a useful guide.<sup>16</sup> There are, however, some problems with this publication, one being the theoretical vagueness as to what constitutes a genre or source represented by each individual volume. Another is the practical difficulty that some genres which might have lent themselves to such an investigation are lacking. More useful for my purpose would have been works on ‘conversion narrative’ or ‘autobiography’ than the available ‘dendrochronology’ and ‘cookbooks’. But although the *Typologie* has been helpful for supplementing random discoveries, such genre-based classifications, however defined, have proved disappointing for the investigation of the nature of the doubt expressed, alluded to, or discussed within them.<sup>17</sup>

For instance, the anticipated correlations between, say, doubt and autobiography, or doubt and conversion narratives have not proved straightforward. In the case of autobiography, the memoirs of Otloh von St Emmeram (c. 1010–70), a Bavarian monk, contain plenty of doubt, while those of Guibert de Nogent (c. 1055–1125), a fellow Benedictine, but French, exhibit almost none.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, a vivid account of his own doubts about the Eucharist appears unexpectedly in Herbert of Bosham’s hagiographical treatment of the life of Thomas Becket.<sup>19</sup> Finally, apparently similar types of doubt can be found in different genres (as defined or not defined by the *Typologie*) while manifestly different types appear in the same genre.

<sup>16</sup> *Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972–). By 2006 the work consisted of some eighty-six fascicules. The first sets out the committee’s plan for the series. See *Typologie: Introduction*, ed. by Léopold Genicot (1972).

<sup>17</sup> ‘[U]ne table alphabétique des genres et une table systématique par domaines de recherche’ was meant to overcome the problem of multiple placements; however the analytical index does not contain an entry for ‘doubt’.

<sup>18</sup> Otloh von St Emmeram, *Liber de temptatione cuiusdam monachi*, ed. and trans. by Sabine Gäbe, *Lateinische Sprache und Literature des Mittelalters*, 29 (Bern: Lang, 1999). See further Chapter 3, below; Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie (De uita sua)*, ed. and trans. by Edmond-René Labande, *Les classiques de l’histoire de France au moyen âge*, 34 (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1981). However, his treatise *De sanctis et eorum pigneribus*, in *Opera varia*, ed. by R. B. C. Huygens, CCCM, 127 (1993), pp. 79–175, does raise doubts about the authenticity of specific relics.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert of Bosham, *Vita S. Thomae*, in *Materials*, III, 155–534, 214–15.

## *Types of Doubt*

I say 'manifestly', but how do we recognize and classify such differences? I have already described how doubt may range in intensity from mere uncertainty about something (the truth of a proposition) towards its outright denial. But doubt can also be thought of as differing in *kind* according to the nature of the things about which the doubter is uncertain. At first glance, some doubts may be broadly classed as 'epistemological', having to do with the truth or certainty of propositions describing states of affairs. For example 'He was uncertain whether he had arrived at his destination or not'; 'She was uncertain/doubted that the soul lives on after the body'; or 'He wondered whether the abbot would return in time for Easter.'

Another kind of uncertainty involves courses of action — what to do — rather than what to believe and could thus be classed as 'ethical' or 'practical/pragmatic' if we want to leave out the sense of right or wrong. For example, 'She was uncertain' — or to put it somewhat archaically, 'she doubted' — 'whether to go or stay', 'He was uncertain whether to become a monk or a canon'.

But on closer examination, it seems that this is just a shorthand way of indicating uncertainty which can also be expressed in propositional form. Thus, 'He was uncertain whether to do *x* or *y*' can be unpacked in the following ways: he was uncertain whether 'it was morally right for him to do *x* or *y*' or whether 'it would serve his purposes/would be prudent to do *x* rather than *y*', or whether 'he would rather do *x* than *y*', or perhaps more importantly, whether 'it was/is God's will that he should do *x* or *y*' (or indeed, a combination of the above). An interesting example of this last is found in a letter of Guibert de Gembloux, one-time secretary to Hildegard von Bingen and later Abbot of Florennes in Belgium, explaining, with characteristic verbosity, his hesitation to undertake a long-desired visit to Hildegard: 'I have set forth these words of hesitation not as if distrusting divine assistance, which often provides for the ignorant, but because I am still uncertain whether to undertake the journey would be right for me.' Guibert concludes his somewhat tortuous explanation by declaring that he has now decided to visit Rupertsberg, since 'He, I believe, when an opportunity and means of visiting you arose, planted the resolve in me and inflamed my desire, knowing it would be good for me.'<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> 'Proinde uerba predictae cunctationis, non quasi de opitulatione diuina diffidens, que etiam nescientibus sepe consulit, protuli, sed incertus adhuc utrum hoc attemptare michi iter expediret [...] credo, michi expedire sciens, uisitandi tibi oportunissima simul et occasione et facultate oblata, ad hoc ut uoluntatem indidit, et desiderium accendit': *Epistularium Guiberti*, ed. by Albert Derolez and others, CCCM, 66 (1988), Ep. 18, p. 226.

If this holds for all such apparently practical and moral choices, it would seem that all doubt can be expressed in propositional form.<sup>21</sup> This being the case, it should be possible to construct some sort of classification based on the nature of these propositions. However, if the propositions which can be the subject of doubt are limitless (as they seem to be) then we are in much the same case as the *Bibliographical Institute of Brussels* which Jorge Luis Borges claims ‘resorts to chaos’ and which he links to the notorious *Chinese Encyclopedia* in his essay ‘The Analytical Language of John Wilkins’.<sup>22</sup> This organization (which interestingly shares a geographical provenance with the *Typologie*<sup>23</sup> mentioned earlier) apparently divided the universe into one thousand more or less arbitrary sectional categories. To take an example at random, section 179 was said to deal with ‘Cruelty to animals. Protection of animals. Moral implications of duelling and suicide. Vices and various defects. Virtues and various qualities’. This example of what he calls ‘heterogeneous subdivisions’ can be contrasted to the monolithic section 262: ‘the Pope’.

Since such an approach does not seem likely to be helpful, I propose a radically simple division, which at least would have made sense to medieval people. That is, the division between secular and sacred, worldly and spiritual, mundane and celestial. Among the countless examples of this dichotomy to be found in writings of the period, Gerald of Wales (c. 1146–1223) evokes it most succinctly when he writes that Thomas Becket (c. 1120–70) followed a policy of ‘fear[ing] only God in divine and spiritual matters; honour[ing] the king in mundane and transitory ones’.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> There is no need to go into the still largely unsolved philosophical problems about the nature of propositions in general, and their relationship both to the mind and the outside world, since my investigation is at the level of common language rather than ontology or epistemology.

<sup>22</sup> See Jorge Luis Borges, ‘The Analytical Language of John Wilkins’, in *Other Inquisitions 1937–52*, trans. by Ruth L. C. Simms (New York: Washington Square, 1966). The *Chinese Encyclopedia* has received a further lease of life through Michel Foucault’s preface to *The Order of Things* (London: Tavistock, 1974), pp. xv–xxiv. We might note that while the *Chinese Encyclopedia* is probably apocryphal, the Bibliographical Institute of Brussels has morphed into the International Federation for Information and Documentation (FID).

<sup>23</sup> Based at the Institut d’études médiévales, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Unde et in diuinis et spiritualibus deum solum timebat, in mundanis autem et transitoriis regem honorificabat’: Gerald of Wales, *De invectionibus*, bk VI, in *Giraldus, Opera*, I, 193. For more on the Becket affair see pp. 36–39, below.

Of course, given the interpenetration of the two worlds in medieval life and thought, such a clear-cut distinction was not unproblematic, as Thomas himself discovered to his cost; but it is a start. First, it allows us to bracket all doubts or uncertainty concerning doctrinal pronouncements and teachings of the Church, and by definition everything that pertains to heaven, hell, and the world to come. But there is also a caveat here, which can be illustrated by the case of relics. While doubts about the authenticity of some particular relic located in the present world — as being the actual remains of a recognized saint — can be classed as mundane, factual, and of the world, doubts about whether relics *per se* are to be considered wonder-working, fall within the spiritual/religious/doctrinal realm. Thus it will often be necessary to consider individual cases on their merits before assigning them to one area or the other.

For example, in the *Vita Bertulfi Rentiacensis* the narrator describes how, after being rescued from a burning church and having spent some time in the safety of a castle, the relics of the saint were being returned by boat to their place of origin. Some doubts arose as to whether what was being returned were indeed the relics of St Bertulf. This was a factual matter, the implication being that perhaps some substitution had occurred along the way, although the question was resolved in a supernatural manner. When Bugecinus, the priest carrying the relics, became aware of the doubt, he prayed for a sign:

Then, behold, a flock of birds appeared flying above at the extreme end of which was a white bird, finer than all the rest. The priest, most keenly observing it, said: 'In the name of God, I beg if these are truly the relics of St Bertulf, descend upon them without delay.'

At this the bird flew down, seated itself in the priest's lap and allowed him to stroke it until all doubt had been removed from the hearts of the doubters.<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, Guibert de Nogent's doubts about the authenticity of the milk tooth of Jesus claimed by the monks of Saint-Médard was the occasion of his writing a comprehensive treatise. In *De sanctis et eorum pigneribus* he examined the wider question of how sainthood is attained, together with problems about

<sup>25</sup> 'Tum ecce grex avium desuper volitans apparuit in cuius extremo agmine ales quaedam candidi coloris, quae ceteris praestantior esse videbatur, apparuit. Quam diligentius Sacerdos intuens, In nomine, inquit, Dei tibi praecipio ut si vere hae Sancti sunt reliquiae Bertulphi, tu super ipsas sine mora descendas. Quo dicto avis illa, relicto praeaeuntium agmine, descendit et in gremio Sacerdotis, reliquias sanctas tenentis, resedit. Quam ille blanda manu, quamdiu placuit, cunctis admirantibus contrectavit, itaque absterso a cordibus illorum omni dubitationis scrupulo, libere abire permisit': *Vita S. Bertulphi Rentiacensis*, in *AASS, Feb. I*, p. 686.



the veneration of relics (including those of Jesus) in the context of the theology of resurrection and other issues pertaining to life after death.<sup>26</sup>

### *Contexts and Genres*

But there is another factor to be taken into account when considering the range of doubts alluded to, discussed, described, and ultimately dissolved (or perhaps left unsolved) in the texts under investigation. This could be loosely termed the context of the doubt, as opposed to the content, with which we have been concerned above.

Many accounts of doubt occur as part of a narrative. Such doubts are often represented as those of someone other than the author, although this may sometimes be a cloak for the author's unadmitted uncertainty as Susan Reynolds suggests might have been the case with Guillaume de Tyr and Amalric of Jerusalem.<sup>27</sup> Occasionally, in letters or quasi-autobiographical writings (true medieval autobiographies being rare),<sup>28</sup> the writer describes his or her own doubt. In many cases the way the doubt was resolved, whether in the form of some miraculous intervention or by the advice of a wiser person, is included in the narrative account. Such treatment of doubts may occur across a range of genres listed in the *Typologie* of greater or lesser fictionality — from literary compositions in poetry or prose to hagiography, autobiography, chronicles, and history and letters.

Sometimes doubt does not occur as part of a narrative but appears as part of an investigation, discussion, argument, or treatise. The genre of the text is usually indicative of the method of treatment, but not always, as, for example, when a narrative includes a discussion or analysis of doubt. Otto von Freising's history, *Gesta Friderici I Imperatoris*, includes a long and technical discussion of Gilbert of Poitiers's disputed teaching on the persons of the Trinity in the course of an account of the Council of Paris in 1148. In a similar way, John of Salisbury canvasses the same questions in his *Historia Pontificalis* (c. 1164). The whole matter was revisited by Everard of Ypres towards the end of the century in a remarkable dialogue, modelled on the Socratic dialogues of Cicero, which comprises a re-examination, or rather, a defence, of Gilbert's controversial views on the Trinity.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Guibert de Nogent, *De sanctis et eorum pigneribus*.

<sup>27</sup> See Reynolds, 'Social Mentalities', p. 33.

<sup>28</sup> The classic work on the elusive genre is George Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, 4 vols (Frankfurt a.M.: Schulte-Bulmke, 1949–69).

<sup>29</sup> Otto von Freising, *Gesta Friderici Imperatoris*, bk I, chap. 48, MGH SS 20, ed. and trans. by Charles C. Mierow as *The Deeds of Frederick Barbarossa* (New York: Columbia University



Conversely, in the course of its analysis of the concept, a treatise may include a narrative account of doubt.<sup>30</sup> In other cases, such as some retellings of the Ursula story, we have a description or narrative which includes the author's sceptical comments on the matter being presented. Thus we read in Elisabeth von Schönaue's account of St Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins of her reaction to a visionary encounter with one Caesarius. This apparition claimed to have been a soldier escorting the maiden band on its journey to Rome: 'I was thrown into great doubt by his words, for I had thought, like everyone else who has read the story of the British virgins that the blessed company performed their pilgrimage without the company and support of men.'<sup>31</sup> Such authorial doubt shows how writers might question their materials, or at least seek to deflect disbelief in their audience. In this case the author's doubt was resolved by a further vision. A rather different way of deflecting the reader's doubt may be seen in a work by Gerald of Wales. In the prologue to his *Expugnatio Hibernica* he rebuffs a critic who apparently accused him of credulousness because of all the marvels included in the work. In this case he counters by producing biblical and patristic authorities for such marvels.<sup>32</sup>

### *Implied Doubt*

So far my discussion has been in terms of identifying and analysing different kinds of doubt in twelfth-century texts. Such doubts may be described as part of a narrative, analysed as part of a treatise or discussion, or appear as an instance of

Press, 1953); John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis*, ed. and trans. by Marjorie Chibnall as *Memoirs of the Papal Court* (London: Nelson, 1956); Nikolaus M. Häring, 'A Latin Dialogue on the Doctrine of Gilbert of Poitiers', *Mediaeval Studies*, 15 (1953), 243–91, and 'The Cistercian Everard of Ypres and his Appraisal of the Conflict between St Bernard and Gilbert of Poitiers', *Mediaeval Studies*, 17 (1955), 143–72. For doubts about the historicity of the Everard of the dialogue see Theresa Gross-Diaz, *The Psalms Commentary of Gilbert of Poitiers* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 16–19.

<sup>30</sup> See Baldwin of Forde on the Fall of Eve, pp. 99–103, below.

<sup>31</sup> For Elisabeth von Schönaue, see Anne L. Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönaue: A Twelfth-Century Visionary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992). For the text of the *Revelations*, see *Die Visionen der hl. Elisabeth und die Schriften der Äbte Ekbert und Emecho von Schönaue*, ed. by F. W. E. Roth (Brünn: Verlag der Studien aus dem Benedictiner-und Cistercienser Order, 1884). For translations, see *Elisabeth of Schönaue: The Complete Works*, trans. by Anne L. Clark (New York: Paulist, 2000).

<sup>32</sup> Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, in *Giraldus, Opera*, v, 209–11. This critic was possibly invented so that Gerald could parade his knowledge of such authorities.

reflexive doubt on the part of the author. Such medieval treatments of doubt are not confined to particular genres and, indeed, may all appear in the same piece of writing. But there remains the question of how such discussions and narratives relate to the actual extent and nature of doubt in twelfth-century society, that is, doubt experienced by people who lived in the twelfth century. There will always be a problem in moving from record to reality (presuming you think there is a difference, as I do).<sup>33</sup> Moreover the texts being used as evidence are the product of a tiny educated elite, although they sometimes claim to report on the doubts of those beyond this minority. Nevertheless, with doubt, we are perhaps in a better position than with some other subjects because of the existence of what could be termed 'implied doubt'.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes doubt may not be actually mentioned or discussed in a particular piece/class of writing/text, but the very existence of that piece/class/text serves to eliminate doubt and to substitute certainty. One obvious example is the so-called *Decretals*, originally letters written in answer to certain questions or doubts about canon law which began to be collected and classified during the early part of the twelfth century. On a larger scale Gratian's *Decretum* (or concordance of discordant canons) provides both an archive of replies to questions of canon law and a method for solving problems that might arise in future.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, the aim of systematic classification of many kinds of knowledge, often with a view to making the results applicable to the problems of everyday life and governance — that is the whole scholastic project — is a push towards certainty and away from doubt.<sup>36</sup> In this connection Abelard's famous dictum in the prologue to his *Sic et Non* comes to mind: 'By doubting we come to question and

<sup>33</sup> For a useful discussion see e.g. Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> In contrast, for instance, to humour in the Middle Ages. While some works are easily recognizable as parodies, there is a more general problem of how to tell what medieval people considered funny. A text which has long been a puzzle is the *Revelationes*, once thought to be the work of Hermann Joseph, already mentioned. Wilhelm Levison, in his exhaustive work on St Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins seemed to think this work was a parody, though I am not so sure. See Levison, *Ursula-Legende*, p. 132.

<sup>35</sup> On the *Decretum* and the decretals now see Anders Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's 'Decretum'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>36</sup> See Southern, *Scholastic*, I, introduction. For an example of how this trend was developed in the special case of the discernment of spirits, see Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

by questioning we reach the truth.<sup>37</sup> It is, perhaps ironic that doubt itself has been suggested as a tool for eliminating uncertainty. But doubt has always had a somewhat paradoxical status. While it was generally condemned and treated as something to be eliminated in our medieval texts there was one particular instance in which doubt was praised: when Thomas the Apostle was confronted by the risen Lord, described in the Gospel of St John (20. 24–31).<sup>38</sup> Thus the doubt that Thomas expressed about the resurrection could be seen as similarly instrumental for achieving truth or certainty. His doubt was commended but only because it was seen as removing the need or possibility for later generations to doubt. The ambiguous legacy of Abelard's recommendation of doubt as an intellectual tool will be examined further in Chapter 5. However, in the case of knowledge in general, as in the more specific case represented by Doubting Thomas, if the aim is ultimately to eliminate doubt, once certainty has been proclaimed, any further doubt will become suspect.

<sup>37</sup> 'Dubitando quippe ad inquisitionem venimus, inquirendo veritatem percipimus': Peter Abelard, *Sic et Non*, ed. by Blanch B. Boyer and Richard McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976–77), p. 103.

<sup>38</sup> For pejorative descriptions of doubt and more on Doubting Thomas, see Flanagan, 'Lexicographic and Syntactic Explorations', pp. 219–22 and 239–40, and compare Alexander Murray's wide-ranging essay *Doubting Thomas in Medieval Exegesis and Art*, a much expanded version of a lecture given at the American Academy in Rome (Roma: Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia Storia e Storia dell'Arte in Roma, 2006).



## SECULAR DOUBT

We saw in the previous chapter how investigating the vast field of twelfth-century uncertainty might be made more manageable by invoking the familiar medieval distinction between the secular and the sacred, the worldly and the spiritual, the mundane and the celestial. However, since the educated elite belonged, on the whole, to the clerical/spiritual order, they were bound *sub specie aeternitatis* to consider secular doubt as trivial compared to its spiritual counterpart.<sup>1</sup> But such an attitude does not mean that they were immune to the psychological discomforts of mundane states of uncertainty, nor that they could not imagine such feelings of doubt in others. Moreover, since many of these people had often to make decisions which affected the lives of others, even mundane doubts could have far reaching consequences.

No doubt similar anxieties were also felt by the majority of the population who lacked any formal education in secular and, all too often, spiritual matters. Yet since there was less opportunity for unfettered choice in all aspects of life, both for the majority as compared to the elite and for the medieval population in general as compared to their modern counterparts, the scope for everyday uncertainty was accordingly diminished.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is generally true, despite the fact that during the twelfth century the number of educated laypersons was growing, while not all religious could claim to be highly educated.

<sup>2</sup> The disparity is particularly obvious in choice of what to do, rather than what to think. For instance, choice of career was open only to a few; choice in dress, food, place of abode, marriage partner much more limited than today (especially in affluent Western societies), and obviously some choices which depend on centuries of technological development were literally unthinkable (e.g., choice among television channels or choice of mobile phone ring tones.)

But what of uncertainty about objects of knowledge or belief as opposed to uncertainty about how to act or what to do? Initially it would seem that advances in knowledge over the past eight centuries would have reduced the scope for uncertainty about, for example, physical or scientific questions on a day-to-day level. On the other hand, the scope of uncertainty has now been increased in some directions and in some areas of fundamental science (such as subatomic physics) although such doubts might not be expected to weigh very heavily on anyone except the experts.<sup>3</sup> By the same token, as John of Salisbury remarked in his *Policraticus*: ‘Many things can be described, concerning which wise men have doubts, yet these doubts would be unnoticed by common men.’<sup>4</sup>

Finally, assessment by a disinterested observer of the seriousness of the problem which occasions the uncertainty is no indication of how any particular individual will react to it. What seems trivial to one person may be felt as an excruciating problem by another. Obviously, due to the nature of our evidence we are more likely to learn about uncertainty that was experienced as serious. Why would one bother to record, in Latin, on expensive parchment, an example of trivial doubt? In such cases medieval people probably did the medieval equivalent of tossing a coin — which might indeed have been tossing a coin, or perhaps, where coins were in short supply, rolling the dice.

### *Herman of Tournai*

Let us turn to some specific examples of secular doubt to see how such uncertainty is expressed and how resolved. The following tale illustrates how the doubter might enlist supernatural guidance.

In 1142 Herman, a monk from the Monastery of St Martin at Tournai (a town in present-day Belgium), found himself with time on his hands during an enforced sojourn at the Lateran Palace where he had gone to seek a papal

<sup>3</sup> I have more to say on this subject in Chapter 7.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Possent in hunc modum enarrari quam plurima quae sic dubitationem sapientis admittunt ut tamen dubitatio ipsa uulguum praetereat’: John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, 2 vols, ed. by C. C. J. Webb (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), bk VII, chap. 2 (II, 99). John’s list contains both spiritual and mundane questions, one of the latter being ‘about the source of the Nile’. The French essayist Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) seems to echo this idea when he writes, ‘Oh what a sweet and soft and healthy pillow is ignorance and incuriosity, to rest a well-made head!’ (*Of Experience*, in Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, trans. by Donald M. Frame (New York: Knopf, 2003), p. 1001).

judgement.<sup>5</sup> To stave off boredom, and fearing he might not survive the gruelling and notoriously unhealthy Roman summer, he decided to write an account of the monastery where he had spent most of his life so that at least he would be remembered gratefully by his successors. As it turned out he did survive the summer, only to disappear after joining the disastrous Second Crusade in 1147.<sup>6</sup>

In the first chapter of his *History*, which is mostly about the illustrious founder of the monastery, Odo of Tournai († 1113), Herman recounts the story of a canon called Galbert. This young man was uncertain about whom to chose from two competing masters of dialectic, the traditionalist Odo, and one Master Rainbert of Lille, who favoured a more modern approach. The question was important, since just as today, choosing the right school could have lifelong consequences, especially when the differences were based on contrasting methodologies or ideologies.

Disconcerted by the differing opinions of his fellow canons as to the merits of the two masters, Galbert decided to settle the question for himself. In Herman's words:

He secretly brought in a deaf-mute soothsayer who was quite renowned in the city for his divination. Galbert began to ask him by signs of his fingers and nods of his head in which of the masters it would be better to trust. *Mirabile dictu*, the deaf-mute immediately understood his question. Drawing his right hand over his left palm as if cleaving the earth with a plough and extending his finger towards Master Odo's school, he indicated that his teaching was most correct. Now extending his finger towards the city of Lille, he applied his hand to his mouth and, by blowing, indicated that the teaching of Master Rainbert was nothing but windy verbiage.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See Herman of Tournai, *The Restoration of the Monastery of Saint Martin of Tournai*, trans. by Lynn H. Nelson (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996). For the text, see *Herimanni Liber de restauracione S. Martini Tornacensis*, ed. by Georg Waitz, MGH SS, 14, pp. 274–317.

<sup>6</sup> Despite having been preached by such luminaries as Bernard of Clairvaux, and led by Louis VII of France and Conrad III of Germany, it was a failure, many of the crusaders never even reaching the Holy Land.

<sup>7</sup> '[T]anta sententiarum errantiumque clericorum varietate permotus, quendam phitonicum surdum et mutum, sed in eadem urbe divinandi famosissimum, secreto adiit, et cui magistrorum magis esset credendum, digitorum signis et nutibus inquirere cepit. Prontinus ille, mirabile dictu! questionem illius intellexit, dexteramque manum per sinistre palmam instar aratri terram scindentis pertrahens digitumque versus magistri Odonis scolam protendens, significabat, doctrinam eius esse rectissimam; rursus vero digitum contra Insulense oppidum protendens manuque ori admota exsufflans, innuebat, magistri Rainberti lectionem nonnisi ventosam esse loquacitatem': *De restauracione*, p. 275.

So, according to Herman, Galbert's doubts were resolved and he decided to follow Odo's lectures. This is an engaging story, full of picturesque and circumstantial detail and it may even be true. Herman notes that consulting diviners and believing what they say is 'contrary to holy precept', which no doubt accounts for the secrecy of the proceedings. This being the case, it is unlikely that he would himself have invented such an account to support Odo's teaching against the modernists, which is, after all, the purpose of the anecdote. It seems more probable that he is making the most of a well-known story despite its dubious theological underpinnings.

It should also be noted that the manner in which doubt is resolved may be influenced by the nature of the genre/discourse in which it occurs. The use of divination is more likely to be found in works, such as the above, which can be broadly classified as historical. We are unlikely to find much recourse to soothsayers in hagiography unless, of course, the saint was acting to eliminate the practice or it was included to represent the errors of the saint's former ways before conversion. So although we know from John of Salisbury that Becket had on occasion consulted palmists, this information does not find its way into the same author's hagiographical *Vita* of Becket.<sup>8</sup>

### *Appeals to the Supernatural*

What was the source of the judgement given by the soothsayer in Odo's case? The deaf mute was certainly not consulted because of his special knowledge of dialectics. Some extra-human authority was being invoked and Herman's ambivalence reflects that of the Church and much learned opinion of the time. Divination, as a species of magic, had long been considered suspect.<sup>9</sup> A series of Church Fathers from Augustine to Isidore of Seville and beyond, backed up by church councils and penitentials condemned its multifarious forms with varying degrees of vehemence.<sup>10</sup> Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636) provided a comprehensive

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Becket, *Vita S. Thomae*, in *Materials*, II, 301–22.

<sup>9</sup> For a good introduction to the extensive literature on this subject see Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For a more substantial, if more controversial, account see Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> A mid-twelfth-century summing up of these judgements is found in *Decretum*, Causa 26, II, cols 1019–46. Here he considers the hypothetical case of a priest who was convicted of *sortilegium* by a bishop, failed to desist, was excommunicated, but finally reconciled to the Church on his deathbed.



catalogue the kinds of divination theoretically available to his contemporaries in his encyclopedic *Etymologies*.<sup>11</sup> He describes necromancers who raise the dead in order to question them; hydromancers who employ water to conjure up ‘the shadows of demons’; and those who use incantations to get in touch with the dead. In keeping with the main organizing principle of the book, etymology is used to distinguish various kinds of diviners, among them *arioli*, so-called because they hang around the altars (*aras*) of idols, and *hauruspices*, who note the auspicious times for performing ceremonies or undertaking business. *Augurers* consult the flight of birds and *auspices* listen for their calls (or vice versa). The *pythonissa* takes her name from Pythian Apollo, well-known for divination.<sup>12</sup> Isidore then goes on to enumerate different kinds of astrologers, including *genethliaci*, who pay attention to the subject’s birth date, also noting that they are vulgarly called *mathematici*.<sup>13</sup> He describes the *sortilegi*, who practise divination by casting lots, sometimes using specially prepared texts and sometimes using the Psalms or Gospels. Then there are *salisatores*, who predict good or evil outcomes from the involuntary movements of the body. But no matter what method is used, Isidore condemns all forms of divination on the grounds that it involves demonic arts. He concludes that all such practitioners ‘should be avoided by the Christian and roundly repudiated and denounced’.

### *John of Salisbury*

Isidore was writing in the seventh century. Half a millennium later, John of Salisbury, in his book of advice for Thomas Becket, found it necessary to reiterate

<sup>11</sup> *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. by Wallace Martin Lindsay, *Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), bk VIII, chap. 9. It is not always clear what methods were actually current and what were recalled from earlier Graeco-Roman practice.

<sup>12</sup> This is the female version of the *pithonicus/phitonicus* mentioned in Herman’s story. The word is used in the Vulgate for the ‘Witch of Endor’ (1 Sam. 28) where it is suggested that she was able to raise Saul from the dead. However, medieval commentary on this passage denied her that power and concluded that what Samuel saw was a devilish illusion. By the twelfth century the word seems to have been used in a more general sense as ‘diviner’, though in some cases retaining its sinister overtones. See e.g. John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, bk II, chap. 27 (I, 143).

<sup>13</sup> For a contemporary (though possibly historicizing) catalogue, see *The Play of Daniel* where Nebuchadnezzar, confronted by the writing on the wall, commands: ‘Vocate mathematicos, Chaldeos et ariolos, | aurspices inquirite, et magos introducite!’ (*Nine Medieval Plays*, ed. and trans. by Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 22).

Isidore's condemnation of such activities. That he was not just repeating a well-worn list is suggested by his claim that he had gained a kind of immunity to such practices by being exposed to them as a child. The priest to whom he had been entrusted for his early education apparently dabbled in hydromancy. His stock in trade seems to have relied upon a basin, water, some consecrated oil and fingernail parings. Demonic names were invoked, which horrified John and alerted him, young as he was, to the wickedness of what was being attempted. Consequently, although his slightly older companion claimed to have discerned some nebulous images, John saw nothing more than the basin, the oil, and the nail parings.<sup>14</sup> Another indication that John was updating the traditional list is his inclusion of forms of divination not mentioned by Isidore, among them chiromancy or palmistry.<sup>15</sup> In fact, he chided Becket for having consulted a palmist or soothsayer when he was planning a campaign against the Welsh in 1157. John ridiculed the practice by reminding his patron that the predicted outcome did not come to pass.

### *Role of Demons in Prognostication*

On the other hand, it was well known that sometimes prognostications did come true. There were several contemporary explanations for this. One, which has a long history, going back to Roman times at least, was to recognize the accumulated experience of such people as farmers and fishermen, who were knowledgeable in weather lore and might use it to predict future events. Soldiers and commanders, experienced in warfare, might also be able to predict military outcomes. Another possible explanation was that God, for various reasons of his

<sup>14</sup> For John's list see John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, bk I, chap. 12 (I, 50–55). For the story of the priest see John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, bk II, chap. 28 (I, 164). David N. Bell, in his article, 'Twelfth-century Divination and a Passage in the *De commendatione fidei* of Baldwin of Forde', *Cîteaux*, fasc. 1–4 (1993), 237–52, suggests that this occurrence can be dated around 1125, the same year that the Council of Westminster condemned 'sortilogos, ariolos et auguria queque sectantes, eisque consentientes'.

<sup>15</sup> It is not clear when this ancient form of divination became widespread among Christians. Valerie Flint says that palmistry is condemned in the *Homilia de sacrilegiis* which dates from the eighth century (*The Rise*, p. 225). But see Charles Burnett, 'The Earliest Chiromancy in the West', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 50 (1987), 189–95, who claims that 'even references to the practice of chiromancy in Latin works appear to be absent between classical times and the mid-twelfth century' (p. 189). Another practice, divination involving swords, may have had Germanic origins and seems to be unknown to Isidore.

own (including the testing of human faith), might allow the prediction to come true, although it was in no sense foreknown by the diviner.<sup>16</sup>

But as a general rule, the fact that demons were thought to be implicated in traditional divination was enough to put it beyond the pale for orthodox Christians, even though it may have been tolerated in times past. Thus Hildegard warns 'those who perversely examine the future by means of created things' in *Scivias* that

I [i.e. God] will no longer tolerate this perverse error, your seeking signs for your actions in the stars or fires or birds or any other creatures; all those who by the Devil's persuasion first fell into this error despised God and overthrew his precepts [...] but I shine above every creature in the glory of my divinity and my miracles are manifested to you in my saints, so I wish you not to practise this error of augury any more, but look toward me.<sup>17</sup>

Yet the question of the exact role evil spirits might have in augury, soothsaying, or fortune-telling was a vexed one and subject to change over time. Caesarius von Heisterbach was born in Cologne around the turn of the thirteenth century. While a monk at the Cistercian monastery of Heisterbach, on the Rhine, he compiled a book of spiritual anecdotes which he arranged under twelve headings, in order to instruct novices in a wide range of contemporary monastic lore.<sup>18</sup> In

<sup>16</sup> On this see Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione fidei*, in *Balduinus de Forda Opera*, ed. by David N. Bell, CCCM, 99 (1991), pp. 340–458, chap. 85 (p. 433); Bartholomew of Exeter, *Contra fatalitatis errorem*, ed. by David N. Bell, CCCM, 157 (1996), chap. 7, pp. 14–15; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, bk II, chap. 2 (I, 68–70). Hildegard makes a similar point in *Scivias*, bk I, vis. 3, chap. 20, pp. 50–51, with respect to astrology.

<sup>17</sup> 'Sed errorem huius peruersitatis, scilicet quod signa actuum tuorum in stellis aut in igne aut in auiibus seu in alia huiusmodi creatura quaeris, amplius nolo tolerare; quoniam omnes isti qui errorem hunc diabolica suasionem primum adinuenerunt Deum contemnentes, praecepta illius omnino abiecerunt [...]. Ego autem super omnem creaturam in claritate diuinitatis meae fulgeo, ita quod miracula mea in sanctis meis tibi manifestata sunt; quapropter nolo ut amplius hunc errorem auguriandi exerceas, sed ut in me aspicias': *Scivias*, bk I, vis. 3, chap. 27, pp. 56–57. That the whole question was not straightforward is shown by the fact that Hildegard herself was possibly responsible for a collection of *Lunaria*, predictions of the character of men and women according to the day of the month on which they were conceived. Perhaps the difference is that this does not predict specific events (although such aspects as length of life are covered.) See Sabina Flanagan, 'Hildegard and the Humors: Medieval Theories of Illness and Personality', in *Madness, Melancholy, and the Limits of the Self*, ed. by Andrew Weiner and Leonard Kaplan (Madison: University of Wisconsin Law School, 1996), pp. 14–23.

<sup>18</sup> Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. by Josephus Strange, 2 vols (Cologne: Lempertz, 1851; republished by Gregg Press, New Jersey, 1966). The headings are: Contrition, Confession, Temptation, Demons, Singleness of Heart, Blessed Virgin Mary, Visions, Body and Blood of Christ, Miracles, Dying, Punishment, and Glory of the Dead.

this *Dialogus miraculorum* (c. 1223) he was prepared to allow that the soothsaying abilities of demoniacs might be heeded, although it was always a somewhat risky process.<sup>19</sup> Presumably although speaking through such people, the demons were thought to be under the ultimate control of God, who was using them for his own purposes. This argument can cover a range of applications and is no doubt responsible for various kinds of practices being tolerated which would otherwise have been condemned.

### 'Sortilegium'

Although the practice of *sortes*, or casting lots, was regularly denounced at councils and in penitentials, it had biblical and historic precedents.<sup>20</sup> Thus some forms were tolerated, especially those that used sacred texts.<sup>21</sup> By the eleventh century one particular version had found its way into ecclesiastical practice. It was the custom at a bishop's consecration for a passage from the Gospels to be randomly selected which would indicate the tenour of the bishop's term of office.<sup>22</sup> So there was general dismay when Christ's cursing of the barren fig tree (Matthew 21. 19) was turned up at Becket's consecration.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk III, chap. 2 (I, 112): 'De clerico, qui stupraverat uxorem militis, quem post confessionem diabolus in stabulo dixit esse iustificatum.'

<sup>20</sup> Among biblical precedents see 1 Samuel 14. 28. The most famous patristic example is Augustine's 'tolle, lege' from his *Confessionum libri XIII*, ed. by Lucas Verheijen, CCSL, 27 (1981), p. 131.

<sup>21</sup> On this much misunderstood topic see William E. Klingshirn, 'Defining the *Sortes Sanctorum*: Gibbon, Du Cange, and Early Christian Lot Divination', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 10 (2002), 77–130.

<sup>22</sup> See George Henderson, 'Sortes Biblicae in Twelfth-Century England: The List of Episcopal Prognostics in Cambridge, Trinity College MS R. 7.5', in *England in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990), pp. 113–35. Guibert de Nogent has an example of their use at the consecration of Gaudry, Bishop of Laon, in *De uita sua*, bk III, chap. 4; see Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. and trans. by Edmond-René Labande. (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1981), pp. 292–94. Williams says of the forty-two prognostications recorded in the Trinity College manuscript that 'there is no reason to reject the vast majority as factual records' (p. 123).

<sup>23</sup> See Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 73.

An even closer example to the Augustinian *tolle lege* is found in Caesarius von Heisterbach's miracle collection. Chapter 49 of Book IV, which is concerned with 'temptation', describes the wavering of Godfrey, scholasticus of St Andreas in Cologne, who had been a novice at the same time as Caesarius. As a mature entrant to the order he found the privations of the Cistercian way of life weighed heavily and towards the end of his probation showed signs of opting for something less stringent or returning to his life as a canon. Caesarius pointed out to him that these were temptations of the Devil. However,

while he was wavering, as I sat beside him one day offering words of consolation, he snatched up a book of the Psalms, opened it and said 'Let us see what my brothers will say about me if I were to go back.' The first verse which he lit upon was this: *They that sit in the gate speak against me and I was the song of the drunkards*. And he cried out immediately: 'O true prognostication! I shall explain the prophecy to you: If I return to St Andrews my fellow canons, as often as they sit at the church door will speak against me, judge me, and argue about my salvation. At night, when they sit by the fire enjoying their drinks I will be the burden of their song.'

The message was thus clear. The old man became a monk, lived a life of contrition, and soon passed over to the Lord.<sup>24</sup> Given such an exemplary outcome Caesarius could hardly quibble about the method by which it was reached.

Possibly the use of holy books (the Gospels or the Psalter) in this instance helped to dispel suspicion and change the emphasis from devilish to celestial intervention.<sup>25</sup> Such associations probably also explain another case mentioned by Caesarius von Heisterbach, where women chose their patron saint by means of candles.<sup>26</sup> He writes:

<sup>24</sup> 'Sic eo fluctuante, cum die quadam ego ad latus eius sederem, et verba consolationis impenderem, codicem Psalmorum arripuit, aperuit, et ait: Videamus quid de me dicturi sint fratres mei, si reversus fuero. Primus autem versiculus qui occurrit, iste erat: *Adversum me loquebantur, qui sedebant in porta, et in me psallebant, qui bibebant vinum*. [Ps 68. 13] Statimque exclamavit: Verum praeosticum! Ego, inquit, tibi exponam prophetiam istam: Si rediero ad sanctum Andream, concanonici mei, quotiens in porticu ecclesiae suae sedebunt, ipsi adversum me loquentur, me iudicantes, et de salute mea disputantes. Noctibus vero, quando sedebunt ad ignem, et vacabunt potationibus, ero psalmus eorum. Sicque Dei misericordia ad mentem reductus, et a se ipso confortatus, monachus effectus est, et non multo post in bona contritione defunctus, migravit ad Dominum': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 49 (I, 216).

<sup>25</sup> This may also explain why the so-called *Sortes sanctorum*, typically a collection of oracular responses which were consulted by casting dice, was held in suspicion. See Klingshirn, 'Defining', pp. 91–98.

<sup>26</sup> 'Consuetudo est maxime provinciae nostrae matronis, ut tali sorte specialem sibi Apostolum eligant. In duodecim candelis duodecim Apostolorum nomina singula in singulis scribuntur, quae a sacerdote benedictae altari simul imponuntur. Accedens vero femina, cuius nomen per candelam

It is the custom in our region, especially for women, to chose for themselves a special Apostle by lots. The name of each of the Twelve Apostles is written on twelve candles and the candles, having been blessed by the priest, are placed together on the altar. When the woman chooses a candle, she takes as her special object of devotion the Apostle whose name was written on it.

Caesarius does not suggest anything is wrong with this practice either, and it should be noted that it required the cooperation of a priest; his opprobrium is reserved for the woman who did not abide by the lot (which in her case fell on St Andrew) and repeated the process several times until she managed to draw an Apostle more to her taste.

### *Philosophical Objections to Augury*

Apart from the possible involvement of demons, there was a further philosophical or theological objection to auguries. This concerned foreknowledge and free will. The objection applied more to cases where future knowledge or action was in question than to those where divination was used to answer a present doubt, such as the identity of a thief, or indeed, the choice of a master. Although the philosophical ramifications of the problem proved intractable at the time, it was generally understood that there was a problem.<sup>27</sup> For instance, Bartholomew of Exeter († 1184) wrote his treatise, *Contra fatalitatis errorem*, in response to those who excused their crimes by invoking the inevitability of divine providence or astral influences, while his friend John of Salisbury also devoted several chapters of the *Policraticus* to the question.

### *Political Prophecy*

Similar difficulties could arise in the case of political prophecy. But since there were numerous illustrious precedents both biblical and classical (and some such as the various Sibylline prophecies were a mixture of both), the practice was tolerated at the highest levels of church and state.<sup>28</sup> While individuals such as Peter

extrahit, illi plus ceteris et honoris et obsequii impendit': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk XIII, chap. 56 (II, 129).

<sup>27</sup> On the various attempts to deal with the problem see Marcia L. Colish, *Peter Lombard*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 290–302.

<sup>28</sup> On the Sibylline prophecies see Peter Dronke, 'The Medieval Sibyls: Their Character and their "Auctoritas"', *Studi Medievali*, ser. 3, 35 (1995), 581–615.

of Wakefield, who prophesied that King John's reign would end on Ascension Day 1212, came and went, written prophetic texts were more enduring. The Prophecies of Merlin, composed by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 1130s and incorporated into his *Historia Regum Britanniae* were extremely popular and could be applied to many political situations.

Thus John of Salisbury, in a letter to Thomas Becket of July 1166, alludes hopefully to a prophecy by Merlin: 'It is said that the time is at hand when the eagle of the broken covenant, according to Merlin's prophecy, shall gild the bridle which is being given to his boar or being forged now in the Breton peninsula.'<sup>29</sup> Yet John is rather selective in his reliance on Merlin. He ridicules Gilbert Foliot's claim, based on another prophecy of Merlin, that the see of London should have metropolitan status, this being totally at odds with the claims of Canterbury and Becket.<sup>30</sup> Whether such prophecies were resorted to by political actors in times of uncertainty for deciding what to do, rather than simply for propaganda purposes, is unclear. But it is certain that they were often used after the event to explain what had happened.<sup>31</sup>

### *Supernatural Solutions: Heavenly*

But let us suppose that the fame of the deaf-mute soothsayer had not reached Galbert at the critical time. How else might he have resolved his doubts? If he was not content to resort to human judgement, his own or that of others, the preferred course was to try and discover God's judgement in the matter. There were several ways of going about this, apart from the mechanical quasi-sortilegious methods just mentioned, whether by direct prayer to God or by seeking an earthly or heavenly intercessor.

<sup>29</sup> The boar is presumably Henry II. *Letters of John of Salisbury*, II: *The Later Years (1163–1180)*, ed. by W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke, OMT (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), Ep. 173, p. 134: 'Instat enim tempus, ut aiunt, quo aquila rupti foederis, iuxta Merlini uaticinium, fraenum deauratura est, quod apro eius datur, aut modo fabricatur in sinu Armorico.'

<sup>30</sup> 'He relies on a prophecy of Merlin who is said (inspired by I know not what spirit) to have prophesied before the coming of St Augustine'; *Letters of John of Salisbury*, Ep. 292, p. 668: 'Fretus tamen est oraculo Merlini qui, nescio quo repletus spiritu, perhibetur ante aduentum beati Augustini.'

<sup>31</sup> See Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075–1225* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 651–54.



The following example of dealing with doubt in a time of crisis is taken from an anonymous hagiographical text, one of the twelfth-century narratives of the story of St Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins, to which I have already alluded.<sup>32</sup> This version, which sets out most of the basic framework of a story which was to gain in surprising detail over the next century, tells how Ursula, a British princess, had dedicated herself to God from an early age. As she grew up, her hand was sought in marriage by the son of a powerful tyrant from a neighbouring country. Ambassadors came with gifts to woo her, backed by some none too subtle threats as to what refusal might mean. This placed her loving father in a dilemma, vividly described by the writer: 'He began to waver inwardly, thinking it most unworthy that his daughter, devoted most strictly to the heavenly spouse, be torn, resisting, from the embraces of the eternal king, and be subjected to the pollution of barbarian lust.'<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, the alternative was likewise insupportable: 'Already he seemed to see before his eyes the fall of men of all ages, the ruin of cities, the rape of matrons and virgins, churches burned, shrines profaned and all the miseries that might befall a conquered people, especially Christians overcome by pagans.'<sup>34</sup> What to do? The story describes how 'he ran to the divine mercy [...] and with face suffused with tears sought aid from heaven with unwearied prayers'.<sup>35</sup> Yet no direct answer is forthcoming and he is still wavering on the morning of the day when the ambassadors require his response. But all is not lost, since Ursula had been busy on her own behalf and had by similar means of prayer and fasting elicited an answer from her heavenly Bridegroom. She was able to tell her father to accept the ambassador's proposal since the course of her life and eventual virgin martyrdom had been conveyed to her by means of a dream. This dream also set the terms of the unusual marriage contract which allowed Ursula three years to enjoy her maiden status, together with eleven thousand virgin companions and their eleven triremes.

<sup>32</sup> *Regnante domino*, in *AASS, Octobris I* (1869), pp. 157–63.

<sup>33</sup> '[F]luctuare coepit intra se, indignissimum reputans, filiam suam, coelesti sponso arctius inhaerentem, ab aeterni Regis amplexibus renitentem avelere, et barbarae libidini poluendam subjugare': *Regnante domino*, p. 157.

<sup>34</sup> '[J]am sibi videre visus est sub oculis suis caedes hominum promiscuae eatatis fieri, urbes dirui, matronas et virgines constuprari, ecclesias cremari, sancta profanari, et quidquid miseriarum alijugando accidit victis, praesertim christianos vincentibus paganis': *Regnante domino*, p. 157.

<sup>35</sup> '[A]d divinam misericordiam, quasi ad turrim fortitudinis a facie inimici, cucurrit, totusque in lacrymas effusus, auxilium de coelo indefessis precibus postulavit': *Regnante domino*, p. 157–58.



In this case the King's prayers were answered indirectly, his daughter being the medium through which God's will was indicated. The failure of his direct approach suggests one reason for the popularity of seeking a more holy intermediary with more direct access to God's will. In this case, while the King himself was 'pious', his daughter was 'imbued with evangelic teachings, meditated day and night on the laws of God [...] sighed with heart and soul for the spiritual bridal couch of her husband' and was — literally — on the road to martyrdom.<sup>36</sup> Here the decision was made more difficult by the fact that it involved his beloved daughter as well as the people whose material and spiritual welfare were in his charge. Happily, God provided a solution that secured the welfare of all parties.

### *'Dialogus miraculorum'*

Such was not the case in the following account from Caesarius's *Dialogus miraculorum*. In Chapter 63 of the section on 'Temptation' we read of a case where an abbot was wondering whether to accept some property from a nobleman which had been gained by the forcible dispossession of certain villagers. The abbot prayed to God and was answered by a voice declaiming a verse from Psalm 60: 'Thou has given me the heritage to those that fear thy name.'<sup>37</sup> Understanding this to be a 'prophetic voice sent from heaven' he was able to interpret the verse in a way that justified his taking over the place and installing monks. He argued that putting monks on the land would be more pleasing to God than leaving the *indevoli* in possession. Caesarius himself seems a little less comfortable with the outcome; he adds that the tale should not to be taken as an example for action 'since all avarice and every injustice should be detested by religious'.

<sup>36</sup> '[E]vangelicis imbuta praeceptis, in lege Domini, die et nocte meditabatur, [...] ad spirituales sponsi sui thalamum corde et animo suspiravit [...]': *Regnante domino*, p. 157.

<sup>37</sup> 'Vir quidam potens et nobilis in terra sua domum ordinis nostri construere desiderans, cum locum religioni congruum invenisset, habitatores eius partim pretio, partim minis eiecit. Abbas vero qui ad eundem locum missurus erat conventum, timens Deo non placere, tali modo pauperes a suis possessionibus alienare, oravit Deum, ut sibi super hoc suam dignaretur voluntatem revelare. [...] Nam die quadam cum esset in oratione, huiusmodi vocem audivit: *Dedisti hereditatem timentibus nomen tuum, Domine* [Ps 60. 6]. Qui surgens mox intellexit per vocem prophetica coelitus demissam, voluntatis esse divinae, ut homines indevoli de eisdem possessionibus eiicerentur, et viri timorati Deumque laudantes ibidem locarentur [...]. Non tamen ista trahenda sunt in exemplum, quia omnis avaritia omnisque iniustitia a religiosis detestanda est': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 63 (I, 232).

*Miracles of St Anselm (c. 1033–1109)*

Eadmer, Anselm's friend and biographer, decided to write a supplementary account of Anselm's miracles some time after his book about the life of his master had gone into circulation. It describes the growing cult of Anselm, especially among the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury. Shortly after Anselm's death, he writes,

[T]here was frequent resort to his tomb by day and night by the brothers, each holding it sweet to carry whatever difficulties arose of body or soul before the well-known kindness of their beloved father, as if he were still alive. Here they implored his counsel and aid in their affairs.<sup>38</sup>

But there was one monk who had joined the order after Anselm's death. He noted the behaviour of his fellows and wished to emulate their recourse to Anselm but

was doubtful whether to pray for Anselm or to beseech him to offer prayers to God on his own account. Having no-one who could entirely free him from this doubt he turned to the bosom of God's grace, begging that he, to whom all the ways of men are open [...] would deign to reveal to him by some certain indication what he ought henceforth truly believe concerning Anselm.<sup>39</sup>

Some idea of the monk's state of mind, together with the idea that prayers were not automatically answered, is evoked by Eadmer when he praises 'the truly wonderful clemency of the Lord which did not allow him to languish too long in a state of doubt [...] but deigned to reveal to him at the second time of asking, the certainty of the truth'.<sup>40</sup> This truth was conveyed via a dream, which showed the monk Anselm's name prefaced by the title 'saint' in a book, described by Eadmer as *The Book of Life*.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> '[D]iebus et noctibus frequens ad sepulchrum ejus fratrum accessus erat, singulis dulce habentibus notae pietati sui carissimi patris suas siquae emergebant necessitates animarum vel corporum quasi vivo depromere, et inde pro modo causarum ab eo consilium et auxilium implorare': *Vita Anselmi*, in *The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, by Eadmer*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Southern (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 167.

<sup>39</sup> 'Nullum igitur habens qui eum ab hac sua haesitatione ad plenum evolveret ad sinum gratiae Dei se convertit, obsecrans ut ipse cui omnes hominum viae patent [...] aliquo certo indicio sibi revelare dignetur quid de Anselmo verius amodo sentiat': *Vita Anselmi*, pp. 167–68.

<sup>40</sup> '[V]ere clementia Domini mira. Non passa est hominem diutius in haesitatione sua languere, sed quam pie petebat rei veritatem [...] dignata est certa revelatione mox iterata prece docere': *Vita Anselmi*, p. 168.

<sup>41</sup> 'Et ecce ante illum volumen apertum, in quo deducto lumine vidit decentissime scriptum SANCTUS ANSELMUS': *Vita Anselmi*, p. 168. Such authentication of a saint by reading words seen

It might be noted here that the monk had nowhere else to turn, or at least believed that was the case. So casting oneself on God seems to have been something of a last resort. Perhaps this indicates that the Old Testament view of God was still held by many, rather than the more intimate and personal attitude which we have come to associate with twelfth-century affective piety and reformed monasticism. Thus Baldwin of Forde, although he was a Cistercian, when talking about prayer in his *De commendatione fidei* does not envisage people approaching God through prayer with specific questions.<sup>42</sup> At all events, my research seems to show a preference for the use of intermediaries, whether human or otherworldly. The story of Anselm encapsulates a moment of ambiguity. Eadmer seems to be saying that the monks were still consulting him after death because of his human qualities, while the monk who had not known him personally saw it more as a question of his postmortem status.

### *Hermann Joseph*

The following example from the *Vita B. Hermanni Josephi von Steinfeld* suggests why a direct approach to the Lord might have been undertaken only as a last resort. Hermann was especially devoted to the Virgin Mary and often channelled his prayers through her. But on one occasion he took it upon himself to intercede for a monastery which was being 'shaken by many and longstanding tribulations and drawn to extreme straits by frequent buffets of the Lord's blows'. After 'taking up the thurible of the incense of prayer and drawing on the fire of burning love' he was rewarded by a vision.<sup>43</sup> On this occasion the Lord Jesus did not appear 'as

in a vision is not unique. In a coda to the *Regnante domino* version of the Ursula story, a recluse called Helenrude has a vision of the last of the Eleven Thousand Virgins who, having escaped the original massacre by hiding in the hold of one of the ships, was killed the next day. She was identified as 'Cordula', having the name written on her forehead: 'paruit illa, vidit, et legit, discretisque syllabis *Cordula*, distincte scriptum invenit' (*Regnante domino*, p. 162).

<sup>42</sup> Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 11; For a translation of the work, see Baldwin of Forde, *The Commendation of Faith*, trans. by Jane Patricia Freeland and David N. Bell, CFS, 65 (2000). Prayer has been a somewhat neglected topic among medievalists, though the situation is now changing. See Rachel Fulton, 'Praying with Anselm at Admont: A Meditation on Practice', *Speculum*, 81 (2006), 700–33.

<sup>43</sup> '[Q]uod multis et diutinus tribulationibus agitatatum est, et crebris disciplinae Dominicae percussione ad extrema perductum [...] et sumpto thuribulo orationis incensae, et hausto igne caritatis ardentis': *Vita b. Hermanni Josephi*, chap. 52, p. 704.

the hearer of prayers, but as the most strict avenger of the wayward [...] with an expression of extreme severity and bearing in his hand a sharp axe. Terrified beyond words, [Hermann] trembling and shaking, cast himself at the knees of the irate one and with prayers and tears and groans tried to restrain his threatening hand'.<sup>44</sup> In the end, Hermann, by his persistence and because of his own merits, was able to gain a reprieve for the community.

### *Intermediaries: The Saintly Dead*

The development and promotion of the cult of saints also gave opportunities for indirect approaches to the deity. While strictly speaking the saint was a mere conduit through whom prayers might be directed to God, it must often have seemed that the saintly intercessor was the primary locus of aid, including help in times of doubt.<sup>45</sup> Appeal to the Virgin Mary was a special case of recourse to the saintly dead. It seems, indeed, that she was more often approached to intercede with her son or to perform healing miracles in her own right, rather than as a source of advice. In fact, I have yet to find an explicit example of appeal to Mary in time of doubt.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> 'Venit autem, non ut exauditor orantis, sed ut vindex severissimus delinquentis. Tremebundus enim et in vultu totius severitatis apparuit, ferens manu securim acutam, tamquam eamdem Ecclesiam radicatus excisurus, et funditus eversurus. Territus, supra quam dici potest, ad tam terribilem Domini venientis adspectum amabilis intercessor, tremens et pavens ad genua provolvitur irascentis; et quibus potuit precibus, lacrymis et gemitibus tentavit manum continere minantis': *Vita b. Hermannii Josephi*, p. 704.

<sup>45</sup> Whether there can be said to have been a 'patron saint' of doubt is unclear. According to Jean-Claude Schmitt, Guinefort was often invoked 'on behalf of [...] those who, on the point of death, neither die nor recover, and therefore one asks the saint to decide what their destiny is to be'; see his *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort Healer of Children since the Thirteenth Century*, trans. by Martin Thom, Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 121.

<sup>46</sup> The obvious place to look is the collection of Marian miracles, the prototype of which was compiled by Anselm (nephew of St Anselm) at Bury St Edmunds c. 1140. But such tales followed a certain formula that militated against seeing her principally as an advisor. As Miri Rubin points out in her essay 'Mary', *History Workshop Journal*, 58 (2004), 1–16, 'Marian miracles were comfortably predictable: transgression, realization through a shaming Marian miracle, repentance, and reception into Mary's embrace' (p. 10). This also applies to the Marian miracles in Caesarius von Heisterbach although Book VII, Chapter 29 (II, 38–39), contains an interesting account of how a priest was relieved of his excessive fear of thunder by Mary (p. 10).

### *Intermediaries: Living Saints*

Various nonfictional examples of recourse to living people who were seen to be of particularly saintly character or special closeness to God occur in the correspondence of Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179). This remarkable woman was consulted by a wide variety of correspondents seeking advice on a range of problems. One common theme among the letters to her from monastics was whether it was advisable or at least permissible for them to step down from a position of authority in their monastery. Hildegard herself was highly respected as ‘mistress of the nuns at Rupertsberg’ and had founded and continued to administer two convents (at Bingen and at Eibingen across the Rhine). But it was not so much for the wisdom she might have been expected to have gained over many years devoted to the religious life that she was so frequently sought out, but because she was perceived to have a direct line to God — a perception, it might be noted, that she took great care to maintain.<sup>47</sup> To take one from many examples, we find the Abbot of St Anastasius in Rome asking, some time after 1166, ‘that the Spirit who reveals his arcane and hidden wisdom, might indicate to you whether [...] I should persevere or retire so that I could be free for contemplation’.<sup>48</sup>

In her reply Hildegard’s role as intermediary is implicitly conveyed when she begins the letter by reporting the Lord’s words as she has heard them: ‘He who is, says to you, o man.’ She then goes on to give her standard reply (or God’s standard reply) to such questions: that is, to remain in the station to which God has been pleased to call you.<sup>49</sup> Of course, Hildegard was in a particularly strong position to speak for God since she had had her prophetic and visionary credentials recognized by Pope Eugenius III.

Yet this was something of a mixed blessing as far as Hildegard herself was concerned, since she saw her role as one of admonishing the Church in general, interpreting God’s word and will on a global scale, rather than simply being a Christian soothsayer or agony aunt. Hildegard indicates as much in a letter to Abbess Hazzecha of Krauftal, where, after responding to what seems to have been the usual question about resigning from an onerous position, she remarks,

<sup>47</sup> See further Sabina Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen: A Visionary Life* (London: Routledge, 1998), chap. 8.

<sup>48</sup> ‘[U]t Spiritus qui reuelat arcana et occulta sapientie sue, indicet tibi quid mihi expediat [...] perseverare an quiescere ut uacem ipsius contemplationi’: *Epistolarium*, Ep. 190, p. 429.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Qui est, dicit tibi, o homo’: *Epistolarium*, Ep. 190r, p. 430.

In the love of Christ, I tell you that I am not wont to speak about the deeds or the final end of individuals, nor of the things that will happen to them, but rather, I speak and write only those things I am taught in the vision of my soul by the Holy Spirit, unlearned as I am.<sup>50</sup>

Yet this did not prevent others for seeking assurances in more personal matters, and sometimes Hildegard seems to have relented.<sup>51</sup>

### *Intermediaries: Recluses and Others*

Although Hildegard was recognized by the Pope as having prophetic credentials, such official recognition was not necessary for the role of interpreter of God's will. More localized fame might suffice. Caesarius von Heisterbach tells of a recluse called Bertradis, famous in her native Westphalia, in the section of the *Dialogus miraculorum* concerned with devils. Whereas Hildegard was certain that her message came directly from God, some intermediaries used by those seeking to know God's will, themselves consulted intermediaries in order to approach the divinity. Apparently Bertradis was in communication with 'an angel of darkness' who nightly entered her cell through the window. Having mistaken him for an angel of light, she was accustomed to consult him on behalf of those who came to her for advice, with predictably unfortunate consequences.<sup>52</sup>

Elisabeth von Schönau (1129–65) called upon the more reliable services of several members of the St Ursula's band, as well as better-known saints. The example of Bertradis shows that there was room for error, though Caesarius's commentary on the case is remarkably lenient, suggesting that the woman herself was not to blame, so long as the advice she gave was for the good, since not all can be discerners of spirits.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> 'In amore quoque Christi tibi dico quod de fine et de operibus hominum, ac etiam de illis que ipsis futura sint, loqui non soleo, sed illa que per Spiritum Sanctum in uisione anime mee doceor, licet indocta sim, loquor et scribo': *Epistolarium*, Ep. 161, p. 362.

<sup>51</sup> This was more likely to be the case when she was dealing with questions from the laity. See Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, p. 159, although her letter to Manegold of Hirsau is unusually direct. See *Epistolarium*, Ep. 131, pp. 305–06.

<sup>52</sup> 'Ad quam si venisset quis, volens cognoscere statum alicuius amici sui defuncti, sive de alia re occulta certitudinem, illa inducias usque in crastinum petivit, angelum suum consuluit, a quo saepius decepta, falsa pro veris respondit': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk v, chap. 47 (I, 332).

<sup>53</sup> 'Legi in scripturis maiorum, quod homo sic a diabolo deceptus ei credendo mereatur, et hoc quamdiu bona ei suadet. Non enim omnibus data est discretio spirituum': Caesarius von

*Modes of Supernatural Knowledge: Trances and Dreams*

There is no suggestion that Bertradis was in any altered state of consciousness when her visitor appeared at the window seeking admission. However, Elisabeth von Schönau's visions sometimes led to a loss of consciousness of her external surroundings, were often occasioned by particular feasts of the liturgical year (or other ceremonies, like the reception of the relics of the virgin martyrs), and could be used to seek answers to specific questions put to her.<sup>54</sup> Hildegard, on the other hand, was very insistent that her visionary communications did not involve a loss of consciousness, nor did they come to her in dreams. The former claim may reflect the fact that they had a particular neuro-physiological cause, as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>55</sup> That oenerology, or the interpretation of dreams, was one of the more contested methods of divinatory knowledge might be the reason for her further insistence that they did not come to her by such means.<sup>56</sup> Part of the difficulty was that although the use of dreams to foretell the future and ascertain the divine will had good biblical precedents it was also much favoured by pagan religions. Moreover, it was hard to distinguish a dream occasioned by ordinary physical causes from one which was divinely sent, or indeed, sent by the Devil.<sup>57</sup>

We saw that in our twelfth-century text Ursula was reassured by a dream. But how closely did this represent medieval experience? While prophetic dreams were a hagiographical commonplace such dreams are also attested in non-hagiographic contexts.<sup>58</sup> One interesting example comes from the account of *The Murder of*

Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk v, chap. 47 (I, 332–33). Putting the 'discernment of spirits' on a proper footing was also one of the intellectual/theological tasks of the time.

<sup>54</sup> See Anne L. Clark, *Elisabeth of Schönau: A Twelfth-Century Visionary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992): '[I]t is clear that both she and Ekbert [her brother] believed it was possible for her to provoke or elicit visions' (p. 84). She does this sometimes by praying for a vision, often aided by the whole Schönau community with prayer and fasting: '[T]his belief in the possibility of eliciting visions becomes crucial in the later phase of Elisabeth's visionary activity when she is viewed by Ekbert and others as a medium for acquiring specific knowledge otherwise out of their reach' (p. 84). With Hildegard it was never quite so obvious or direct. See Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, chap. 10.

<sup>55</sup> See Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, pp. 191–99.

<sup>56</sup> On oenerology see Flint, *Magic*, pp. 193–95.

<sup>57</sup> This was recognized in various degrees by Cicero, Gregory the Great, John of Salisbury and Hildegard herself. See *Scivias*, bk II, vis. 6, chap. 81, p. 294.

<sup>58</sup> Often the mother of the future saint has a dream about her unborn child. I do not wish to imply here by distinguishing genres that all hagiography is unreliable (or purely fictional) whereas



*Charles the Good, Count of Flanders*, written by the notary Galbert de Bruges in 1128. Here Bertulf the Provost, one of the conspirators, is described as having scoffed at a prophetic dream in which he saw himself hanging from the gallows at Ypres, the fate which he was ultimately to suffer.<sup>59</sup> However, the purposive seeking of answers to uncertainty by means of a dream is not often described, though it was part of the repertoire by which an answer might be vouchsafed in the context of prayerful petitions to God.<sup>60</sup>

### *Human Counsel*

So far we have been considering supernatural aids to decision-making and the adjudication of doubtful cases. Human counsel was another possibility and one that was strongly recommended both by the Bible and various monastic rules. For example, Chapter 3 of the *Benedictine Rule* includes the prudent admonition from Ecclesiasticus 32. 4: 'Do everything with counsel and you will not be blamed.'

Bernard of Clairvaux, besides acting as advisor to all sorts of people, including, most famously, Pope Eugenius in his *De Consideratione* completed in 1152 or 1153, also reflected on the practice in several of his letters with shrewd psychological insight. He noted that 'many, or should I say, almost all, wise men, while

all non-hagiographical sources reflect 'real life' more closely. We need to take the contexts of the writings into account. Thus some of the dreams found in the *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I*, ed. by William Stubbs, RS, 38 (1864–65), II: *Epistolae Cantuariensis: The Letters of the Prior and Convent of Christ Church, Canterbury; 1187–1199* (1865), which recount at inordinate length the struggles of the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, against a series of archbishops, are of an obviously propagandist nature.

<sup>59</sup> 'Alioque tempore, cum praepositus transiret per Ipram juxta patibulum in foro positum in quo postmodum suspensus est, ait militibus suis: "Deus omnipotens! quid est quod hac nocte somniaverim! Vidi ego per somnium quod in hoc eodem patibulo fixus starem". Derisitque hujusmodi visionem et pro nihilo eam reputavit': *De multro, traditione et occisione gloriosi Karoli comitis Flandriarum*, ed. by Jeff Rider, CCCM, 131 (1994), chap. 84 (pp. 135–36).

<sup>60</sup> Given the general recognition that dreams had some connection to waking preoccupations, it is perhaps surprising that the method was not reported more often. Yet the reasons for being suspicious of dreams may have outweighed such considerations. For dreams in the context of prayer, see the Anselm example above. 'For while he cast himself down in prayer for the second time, suddenly a gentle sleep, as often happens, closed his eyes, and behold, a book'; 'Nam ubi precibus secundo incubuit subito ut sepe contingere solet lenis oculos ejus somnus oppressit. Et ecce ante illum volumen': *Vita Anselmi*, p. 168. That 'incubation', sleeping at a shrine in order to elicit a significant dream, was originally a pagan practice may have led Christian writers to distance themselves from similar activities although the use of the word *incubuit* above is striking.



they can easily solve the difficulties of others are apt to be doubtful and anxious about their own and place far greater confidence in the judgement of others'.<sup>61</sup> In his letter to Archbishop Henry of Sens he sets out the criteria for choosing a good counsellor, drawing heavily on biblical admonitions, among them the observation from Ecclesiasticus 6. 6 that you may have a thousand friends but among them only one fit to be a counsellor.<sup>62</sup>

Obviously some classes of people were more likely to be good counsellors than others. There was a presumption that older people were probably wiser, which led to the conflation of *sanior/senior* in the various rules for electing abbots and general decision-making in monastic customals.<sup>63</sup> Often it was considered that the advice of close relatives should be heeded. Otloh von St Emmeram reproached himself for not having sought the advice of his relatives and friends before he decided to join a monastery where things did not work out as he had hoped.<sup>64</sup> John of Salisbury lamented the fact that Henry II did not take the advice of his mother in the Becket affair.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, the classes of people whose advice should be sought in secular terms merges with that of the people who might

<sup>61</sup> '[Q]uod plerisque, immo cunctis paene contingere sapientibus solet, in rebus videlicet dubiis plus alieno se quam proprio credere iudicio, et qui aliorum facile ambigua quaeque elucidant, in suis consueverunt scrupulosius haesitare': Ep. 82, in *SBO*, VII, 214. It should be noted that in contrast to Hildegard and Elisabeth von Schönau, Bernard seems to have been generally consulted for his own human wisdom, rather than as a conduit to the divine.

<sup>62</sup> See *Epistula de moribus et officio episcoporum* (Ep. 42), in *SBO*, VII, 100–31. Henry (familiarily known as 'the wild boar') was converted by St Bernard from the worldly life of a courtier.

<sup>63</sup> Thus the Anonymous of Bridlington, in answer to the question 'Que sit estimanda pars sanior congregationis?' replied: 'Illa michi sanior pars congregacionis esse pronuncianda uidetur, que frequenti usu consilio salubrior, discrezione profundior, ueritate purior, caritate sincerior, uita sublimior esse probatur, cuius animo nec odium indiscretum nec amorem intemperatum preualere certum sit, quia sicut ait sapiens quidam, "He due pestes, iudicium nesciunt": see *Bridlington Dialogue* (London: Mowbray, 1960), p. 191. For the dependence of this work on Richard of St Victor's *Quaestiones Regulae sancti Augustini solutae* see Marvin L. Colker, 'Richard of St Victor and the Anonymous of Bridlington', *Traditio*, 18 (1962), 181–227. *Senior* often meant older in religious profession, so might not refer to chronological age. There was also the idea that 'when several are gathered together in my name' the will of God would be discovered.

<sup>64</sup> 'Et reor hoc primum de fraudibus his perhibendum, quod ante monachilis vite professionem and postea diu perpeusus sum, quia scilicet satis stolidam inprovidaque mihi inesset voluntas conversionis, quam contra scripturam, quae dicit: *Omnia fac cum consilio*, sine consilio parentum et amicorum': Otloh von St Emmeram *'Liber de temptatione cuiusdam monachi'*, ed. by Sabine Gäbe (Bern: Lang, 1999), p. 248.

<sup>65</sup> *Letters of John of Salisbury*, Ep. 157, p. 66. On counsel more generally see Ep. 156, p. 56.

appear as 'oracles' in a dream. As one twelfth-century writer has it they were 'kindred or other holy and responsible people, or priests'.<sup>66</sup>

### *Anselm*

Another example comes from the *Vita Anselmi* by Eadmer, already mentioned. The biographer explains that after studying for some time at Bec, Anselm had to make up his mind what direction his life should take:

Knowing therefore that it is written 'Do all things with counsel, and afterwards you will not be blamed', he did not wish to trust himself unadvisedly to any one of the ways of life which he was turning over in his mind. [...] Although he had many friends besides Lanfranc, when it came to that 'one counsellor in a thousand' to whom he could entirely entrust himself in these circumstances, he chose Lanfranc.

He outlined the three possibilities between which he was undecided: 'either to be a monk, or to maintain a hermitage, or to live on my family estate, ministering to the poor'.<sup>67</sup> For some reason that is not clear, though possibly Lanfranc was himself obeying the injunction to do everything with counsel, he recommended that Archbishop Maurilius of Rouen should be consulted and they went together to see him. Unsurprisingly, the Archbishop, a former monk of Fécamp, extolled the monastic life and so in his mid-twenties Anselm became a monk at Bec.

### *John of Salisbury and the Becket Case*

Further examples of doubts and their resolution can be found in the letters of John of Salisbury and those of his correspondents who were closely connected to Thomas Becket, both before and after his murder. This clash between the spiritual and secular jurisdictions, involving the rights and authority of the King versus the

<sup>66</sup> Possibly Alcher of Clairvaux, 'parens vel aliqua sancta gravis que persona, seu sacerdos': PL, XL, col. 798.

<sup>67</sup> 'Sciens itaque scriptum esse, 'Omnia fac cum consilio et post factum non paenitebis', nolebat se alicui uni vitae earum quas mente volvebat inconsulte credere [...]. Amicos insuper multos habens, sed cui se totum in istis committeret consiliarium unum de mille videlicet praefatum Lanfrancum eligens'; 'monachus fieri volo, aut heremi cultor esse desidero, aut ex proprio patrimonio vivens quibuslibet indigentibus [...] posse [...] ministrare [...] cupio': *Vita Anselmi*, p. 10. Anselm was unable to consult his parents directly as they were both dead by this time (and anyway he had originally fled the parental home because he could not get on with his father).

Church had wide-reaching implications.<sup>68</sup> Those caught up in the conflict, including members of his household, like John of Salisbury, experienced ongoing doubts about what course of action to follow in terms of their own lives and livelihoods; for example, whether or when to return from exile, how closely to be associated with Becket, how to judge the mood of the King, and so on. After Becket had been murdered in 1170, and before he was actually canonized in 1173, there was also the practical question of whether Becket was to be addressed as a martyr and saint in the liturgy. Such questions had both immediate practical and wider theoretical repercussions.

Since we already have some idea of the attitude of John to such things as prognostications, dreams, and fortune-tellers, it comes as no surprise to see that he inclines more to human counsel.<sup>69</sup> Thus in a letter written early in 1171 to John of Canterbury, Bishop of Poitiers,<sup>70</sup> after giving one of the first descriptions of the murder and sketching in the miracles subsequently performed at Becket's tomb, he poses the following question:

Please [...] instruct me in my ignorance whether it is safe, without papal authority, to invoke him [i.e. Thomas] in the solemnities of the Mass and other public prayers among the catalogue of martyrs, as one with control over salvation; or whether as with any other who has died, we are still bound to offer intercessory prayers for him.<sup>71</sup>

That the wording here is reminiscent of the passage discussed earlier about whether to recognize Anselm as a saint is not surprising. John certainly knew of Eadmer's work and, in fact, rewrote Anselm's *Vita* as part of the campaign for Anselm's canonization in 1163.<sup>72</sup> But here the question is slightly different. John is not in doubt about whether Thomas deserves to be recognized, but rather whether such recognition can be given without the papal imprimatur.

<sup>68</sup> For a detailed analysis of the circumstances see Barlow, *Thomas Becket*.

<sup>69</sup> This is not to say that he was some sort of rationalist *avant la lettre*. He certainly believed in the efficacy of relics (see his Letter 158 concerning the Three Kings of Cologne and the Eleven Thousand Virgins) and was a major promoter of Becket's miracles, although he records no prophetic dreams attending Thomas's birth in his short *Vita S. Thomae*, in *Materials*, II, 299–322.

<sup>70</sup> *Letters of John of Salisbury*, Ep. 305, pp. 724–38.

<sup>71</sup> 'Superest itaque ut nostram paruitatem uestra instruat eruditio, an citra Romani pontificis auctoritatem tutum sit in missarum sollempniis et aliis publicis orationibus eum in cathaloگو martirum tamquam salutis praesidem inuocare, an adhuc ei, quem Deus tantis miraculorum clarificauit indiciis, quasi alii defuncto orationes subuentorias teneamur exoluere': *Letters of John of Salisbury*, Ep. 305, p. 736.

<sup>72</sup> It was presented at the Council of Tours in 1163 but did not succeed. Neither, it might be added, did the bid for Bernard of Clairvaux at that time.

John explains that he would have consulted the Pope on the matter but could not leave England without express permission of the King. So John was seeking an answer to his doubts, if not from the Pope, then from a wise and trusted friend. But John is also pondering the question for himself and by the end of the letter seems to have reached his own conclusion, when he says:

It seems wise meanwhile to lend aid to God's will, and revere as martyr [...] him whom God deigns to honour as a martyr. In nearly every corner of the world God has been able [...] to glorify whom He would, waiting on the authority of no man; which no wise man can doubt who peruses holy books of diverse kinds with skill and care.<sup>73</sup>

So when the answer to his original question finally came, in a letter from Peter de St-Rémi (apparently another recipient of the original letter) — that God had clearly glorified the martyr and hence one should not wait on the judgement of any man — it must have served to reinforce the conclusion he had already reached.<sup>74</sup> But that was not all. The question of Thomas's postmortem status had further implications. According to John, if he were indeed a martyr, his acceptability to God would also serve to prove that the pope Thomas supported (Alexander III) was the true pope, as opposed to a series of antipopes recognized by the empire during the eighteen-year schism from 1159 to 1177. As John put it in another letter, written between 1171 and 1173, 'It is doubted by many whether the party of the pope, in which we stand, strove for justice. But the glorious martyr has cleared it of the charge of schism: had he been a promoter of schism, he would in no way be sparkling with such great miracles.'<sup>75</sup>

Yet the continued delay in the papacy's formal recognition of the martyr still exercises John. But on reflection he is able to construct an ingenious answer. He writes that he would have wondered why the Pope was so long in commanding 'him to be received into the catalogue of martyrs' except that he sees (to paraphrase)

<sup>73</sup> 'Nobis tamen interim consultius esse uidetur ut assistamus Domini uoluntati, et quem ipse honorare dignatur ut martirem, nos, siue cantemus siue ploremus, ut martirem ueneremur. Nam fere in omnibus mundi partibus Deus, non expectata cuiuscumque hominis auctoritate, potuit et consuevit clarificare quos uoluit; quod sapienti non potest esse ambiguum, qui uarias scripturas sollerti indagatione diligentius perscrutatur': *Letters of John of Salisbury*, Ep. 305, pp. 738–39.

<sup>74</sup> 'Diffinitive ergo teneo, nulla ratione lucernam accensam in manu Dei posse supprimi vel exstingui: nec ibi expectandum hominis iudicium, ubi manifesta luce Dei se explanat iudicium': *Letters of John of Salisbury*, p. 724 n. 1. Peter de St-Rémi, Ep. 121, in PL, CCII, col. 570–71.

<sup>75</sup> 'Dubitatur a plurimis an pars domini papae in qua stamus de iustitia niteretur; sed eam a crimine scismatis gloriosus martir absoluit qui, si fautor esset scismatis, nequaquam tantis miraculis choruscaret': *Letters of John of Salisbury*, Ep. 308, p. 750.

the circularity of the argument by which the same pope whose authenticity/justice is to be proved by being on the martyr's side actually proclaims him as a martyr. John has already anticipated the argument here in his earlier letter. His conclusion in this case, 'where God is at work a higher authority is looked for in vain', is a more forceful reiteration of the idea.<sup>76</sup>

So in these linked questions about the status of Thomas, John's first impulse was to seek a definitive answer from the Pope. When this proved impossible he turned to a trusted friend, or more likely, several friends, since the letter seems to have been sent to a number of people. Meanwhile he appears to have decided for himself that it was 'safe' to treat Thomas as a saint without first obtaining papal approval. His decision rested upon his own analysis of the situation and his knowledge of historical precedent gained by careful reading. It was strengthened by his sense of belonging to a certain group in society, that of 'men of wisdom'.<sup>77</sup> As time went on, and no doubt as the miracles continued, he decided that to wait for official authorization, given the particular circumstances of the case, might even be a bad thing rather than a desirable one.

### *Accepting Advice*

We have seen in this chapter a variety of ways for resolving mundane or secular doubt, both natural and supernatural. Consulting a wise counsellor or seeking to ascertain the will of God, often through an intermediary, seem to have been the preferred methods. In most cases — here the exception is John of Salisbury — the element of personal decision-making, that is, working the thing out for oneself, has been minimal. Those in doubt accept what the seer, the dream, or the advisor tells them. This is not surprising, since by putting oneself in the hands of others you abdicate, to some extent, your own will and, as the Scriptures also point out, your own responsibility. Such an attitude of submission to the will of another, be it God or one's superior who was explicitly or implicitly seen to be acting in God's place, was part of the Christian and especially the monastic ethos. That such submission was not always achieved — at least not without a struggle — can occasionally be glimpsed in the texts that have come down to us. One such is the

<sup>76</sup> 'Profecto ubi Deus auctor est, frustra superior desideratur auctoritas': *John of Salisbury*, Ep. 308, p. 752.

<sup>77</sup> Herbert of Bosham had included John of Salisbury in his list of Thomas Becket's 'eruditi'; see Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, pp. 130–31.

*Life of Robert of Béthune* by William of Wycombe, a work that deserves to be better known, not least for its vivid description of the wild Welsh landscape.<sup>78</sup>

### *Robert of Béthune*

Robert of Béthune was an Augustinian canon who became Bishop of Hereford and died in 1148. The *Life* is one of a number of twelfth-century hagiographies (though Robert of Béthune was never actually canonized) that transcend their propagandistic purposes to display the humanity of their subjects.<sup>79</sup> Although there are puzzles about the birthplace of both the writer and his subject it is clear that they shared a long association, William being Robert's chaplain for many years and privy, as he himself says, to many of the Bishop's inmost thoughts.<sup>80</sup> As it turns out many of these thoughts have to do with doubt and uncertainty — not, it should be said, spiritual doubt, but uncertainty about how to act in this world.

The first occasion is when Robert, after having finally become a successful master in the schools, begins to long for life in a monastery.<sup>81</sup> When at last in a position to withdraw from the world — having provided not only for a set of nephews and nieces but also their subsequent children — the question is where to go and what order to join. As William describes it, 'since he was less inclined to trust his own judgement he hurried off to Abbot Richard, one of his advisers, a man of faith, outstanding in religion and discretion. He poured out his thoughts to him, seeking to hear a fixed answer to his uncertainties.'<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Since the only published version of the text, in *Anglia Sacra*, ed. by Henry Wharton, 2 vols (London: [n. pub.], 1691), II, 295–322, leaves much to be desired, I depend principally for this account on MS 5088 from the collections of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

<sup>79</sup> See for examples *Life of Anselm* by Eadmer, *Life of Hugh of Lincoln*, *Life of Ailred of Rievaulx* — though this is not to say that they are all well-rounded biographies, especially the last, which ignores the more public, administrative, side of Ailred's life.

<sup>80</sup> Julia Barrow suggests he was of Flemish parentage and was probably born in Buckinghamshire, possibly on the manor of Wingrave (*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23724>> [accessed November 2006]).

<sup>81</sup> He had been a pupil of Guillaume de Champeaux and Anselme de Laon but it is possible that he had returned to England to teach by this time.

<sup>82</sup> 'Cumque definitione sue minus crederet rapuit ad Ricardum abbatem de consiliariis suis unum, fidelem uirum religionis et discretionis eximium. Effundit ei propositum mentis sue sed fluctuationibus suis fixam querit audire sententiam': *Vita Roberti*, fols 5<sup>r-v</sup>.

Abbot Richard, rather than providing a direct answer turns the question around and asks him what order and house he finds most attractive, to which Robert replies, 'I do not presume to set up one order over another, but the Order of Canons attracts me most, and the house of Llanthony.'<sup>83</sup> Having elicited this preference, the Abbot immediately endorses it by saying, 'Rise brother and do not delay, walk secure in the name of the Lord, nothing hesitating.'<sup>84</sup> The biographer's comment here is significant: 'Confirmed thus as if by a voice fallen from heaven, he arose, hastened to Llanthony, indicated his desire, made his petition, obtained it with joy.'<sup>85</sup>

The account of Robert's choice of profession can be usefully compared with that of Anselm referred to above.<sup>86</sup> Although Robert appears to be consulting a wiser head, as biblical and monastic precept recommend, considered more closely it looks as if Robert's own judgement or preference was fortunately being backed by his advisor, who also manages to convey the divine imprimatur. In this case the advisor is represented as being a conduit for God's will rather than delivering advice based on his own expertise. Nor is it a case of blind obedience like Anselm's, where it is suggested that he would have obeyed even the most bizarre command of Lanfranc.<sup>87</sup> Robert is clearly accepting something that he wanted to hear. Indeed Robert's *Vita* also contains an example of the converse of this process, where in another conflicted situation he rejects advice that he does not want to hear.

In 1131, after spending a decade as prior in happy seclusion at Llanthony, Robert heard a rumour that he had been proposed to King Henry as the next Bishop of Hereford, a see which had been vacant for almost five years. Appalled by this news, he asked his superior, Urbanus, Bishop of Landaff, to forbid his removal from Llanthony. This gains him a year's respite, after which legates from Pope Innocent II arrive to order the Bishop and Prior Robert to obey. The proper

<sup>83</sup> 'Nulli inquit ordini preiudicare presumo. Ordo tamen canonicus me amplius trahit domusque Lanthoniensis': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>84</sup> 'Surge inquit frater ne moreris. Ambula securus in nomine domini nihil hesitans': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>85</sup> 'Confirmatus ilico tamquam uoce lapsa de celo, surrexit Lanthoniam properauit desiderium suum indicauit petitionem fecit cum gaudio impetrauit': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 5<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>86</sup> It is possible that the William of Wycombe knew of this earlier work and was consciously or unconsciously drawing upon it. If so the differences are all the more significant.

<sup>87</sup> For example: 'Stay in this wood and mind that you never leave it so long as you live' (In hac silva mane, et ne dum vixeris hinc exneas cave): *Vita Anselmi*, bk I, chap. 6, p. 11.



course of action is obvious, but Robert is not persuaded. He remains torn between his wish to remain at Llanthony and his duty of obedience. Seeking to avoid the order he turns to the monks and asks whether they have any argument which might keep him among them. However, their disappointing advice is as follows: 'Because there is no wisdom or counsel contrary to the Lord, our counsel is to make a virtue of necessity and bear with equanimity what you cannot change.'<sup>88</sup>

Clearly this was not the counsel Robert wanted to hear. But he leaves Llanthony in tears, 'seeing himself like Adam thrust from paradise into exile', and still apparently seeking some honourable way to avoid his fate. That night, in lodgings at Ross-on-Wye, both Robert and William, his companion and biographer, are terrified by a nightmare or vision, starting from their sleep at precisely the same moment. Next day they relate their dreams to each other. Unusually in the case of hagiography the content of the dreams is not described by the narrator, but William says they both realized that they pointed to the same conclusion. 'So', writes William, 'his hope of evasion vanished at last, which he had not given up until then.'<sup>89</sup>

But from William's subsequent description of events it appears that his conclusion was premature. As they resume their journey to Hereford Robert continues to wrestle with his fate, lamenting, 'while I am a free man and my own master, why do I enter into slavery and torment seemingly with open eyes and a consenting mind?' and more in the same vein.<sup>90</sup> At this, William admitting himself 'moved to impatience' (*impacienter comotus*), challenges Robert on the issues of freedom and will. He first points out that they are hardly free, 'whom the shackle of Apostolic authority has fettered'. Then as a sort of shock treatment he tries to call Robert's bluff. 'If', he says, 'obedience counts for less than will, why hesitate to choose the better. Behold, on our left lies a plain fit for escape, on our right, a wood to hide in.'<sup>91</sup> Then, fearing he might have gone too far William hastens to

<sup>88</sup> 'Sed quia non est sapientia non est consilium contra dominum consilium nostrum non [*sic*] est facere de necessitate uirtutem et equanimitate tollerare quod mutare non possis': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 12<sup>r</sup>. The third 'non' is obviously a mistake of the copyist.

<sup>89</sup> 'Euanuit tandem spes eius euadendi quam nec dum proiecerat': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 13<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>90</sup> 'Ecce dum liber et meus sum quid me tamquam uidens et uolens ingero in seruitutem et tormenta?': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 13<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>91</sup> 'Non sic mihi constat liberum esse, quem Apostolicae auctoritatis cathena constringit'. This sentence appears in Wharton but not in the Toronto manuscript. 'Si minor est obediencia quam uoluntas quid cunctamur quod melius est eligere. Ecce patet a sinistris planities ad fugam. Nemus a dextris ad latibulum': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 13<sup>r</sup>.



excuse his outburst, but Robert seems to get the point. Although he still tries to convince his backers that they have made a terrible mistake when he gets to Hereford, when this fails he allows himself to be dragged, resisting to the last minute, to the episcopal throne.

What are we to make of such an account? It seems more than an elaborately extended *noli episcopari* topos.<sup>92</sup> William was interested in how behaviour relates to inner experience and thus presents a protracted dramatization of how the process of doubt and its resolution was worked out in Robert's case. William's account is especially interesting in showing how Robert fails to be persuaded or reconciled by the usual doubt-dispelling remedies such as the counsel of the monks or the supernatural expedient of the simultaneous dream. Robert is shown to be trying to work out his own course even in the face of such traditional aids. William also displays his irritation at the fact that Robert's doubt is prolonged even after it should have been resolved by the dream (or dreams, for it is unclear whether both men are said to have had the same dream or different dreams with the same meaning). Of course, this is not to claim that Robert actually had these thoughts and feelings, but it shows how a contemporary could construct a finely nuanced picture of doubt and its remedies within a certain context. At any rate, we may presume that such states were at least recognizable to his intended audience.

The examples so far examined show some of the mundane doubts that might have been experienced in the twelfth century and the means by which the doubter sought to work through them. Those that rely on outside assistance include, first, recourse to the supernatural, as in soothsayers or diviners, or — a more orthodox approach — to God by means of living prophets or visionaries or the saintly dead. Application to God directly through prayer, or perhaps more surprisingly, to his Mother, does not seem to have been a common method of resolving doubt.

The second method, where outside help is sought, involved trusting in human counsel. Since many of these counsellors were chosen because of their evident holiness and closeness to God, it is not always clear whether this advice should be thought of as human or divine, as in the case of Robert of Béthune and Abbot Richard.

<sup>92</sup> A show of reluctance was often thought appropriate for those called to high episcopal office. For a discussion of Anselm's genuine reluctance to being made Archbishop of Canterbury, see R. W. Southern, *St Anselm, A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 186–94.

The third method relied upon working the problem out for oneself, that is, trusting one's own counsel. While this course obviously runs counter to the injunction always to seek advice from others, in all cases where uncertainty or doubt is overcome, the doubters have to judge whether (at very least) to accept the advice or apply the evidence of the miracle, the soothsayer, or God to their own situation. Advice from human counsellors may also be accepted or rejected. Even a potentially doubt-dispelling dream or other supernatural resolution needs ultimately to be accepted as such, or rejected by the doubter.

The distinction here is not between so-called 'rational' and 'irrational' methods of dissolving doubts.<sup>93</sup> In some cases it may well have been more 'rational' to be guided by what was understood to be a supernatural sign than by one's own judgement, which was thought to be ultimately flawed and subject to delusion both from inside and without. As Bernard of Clairvaux remarked in a letter to Guillaume de St-Thierry, 'It is an error to which the human mind is ever prone not only to consider good to be evil, what is true to be false, and what is false to be true, but also to be doubtful about what is certain, and certain about what is doubtful.'<sup>94</sup>

Yet in the end the doubter was thrown back on his or her own resources. Settling for one method rather than another or one side of the dilemma was ultimately a personal decision. This presented few problems when the question in doubt was of a personal or reasonably circumscribed or local nature, like the choice of a master, which order to join, whether this or that relic was genuine, or even, whether or not to accept a bishopric.

### *Public Uncertainties: Guillaume de Tyr*

But what of more general uncertainties? What if the supernatural resolution was ambiguous or inconclusive? And what if the decision might have substantial effects on matters of more public import. Before looking at uncertainty in spiritual matters we should consider a different class of secular doubts, whose resolution

<sup>93</sup> Cf. R. C. Van Caenegem, *English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I*, 2 vols (London: Selden Society, 1990), p. xxv, where he refers to the debate over 'rational' versus 'irrational' modes of proof at law. It might be noted here that the descriptors are not neutral, 'irrational' (since the Enlightenment) having unavoidably pejorative overtones.

<sup>94</sup> 'Error siquidem est humanae mentis, non modo bonum putare malum et malum bonum, aut uerum falsum et e conuerso, sed etiam certa recipere pro dubiis, dubia pro certis': Ep. 85, in *SBO*, VII, 220.

implicates a wider circle. When the uncertainty was shared by a number of people its resolution was often more complicated.

My first example comes from Guillaume de Tyr's *Chronicon*, which records the history of the Crusades down to 1184. In it Guillaume often describes doubts experienced by the Crusader armies about whether to engage in battle or hold back. This was a notoriously difficult exercise where experience could at most be a partial guide. As Baldwin of Forde wrote:

When prudent men of this world discuss matters of war and peace in accordance with what they remember having seen and heard, afterwards they infer from them many future things and predict what they have surmised. But in all these cases and others like them in which human skills play a part, the judgement is uncertain, not trustworthy certainty: a doubtful outcome and a changeable result.<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, while there was a *prima facie* assumption that God was on the side of the Crusaders, experience showed that this might not be helpful in particular battles, nor indeed in particular campaigns, such as the Second Crusade. For it was always possible that sins committed by the combatants might work against such presumed backing.<sup>96</sup> However, from among such expected uncertainties Guillaume singles out for extensive description the climate of doubt surrounding the affair of Pierre Barthélemi and the Holy Lance.<sup>97</sup>

In Chapter 18 of Book VII Guillaume describes the situation during the First Crusade at a time when the Crusaders were suffering a series of reversals. Doubts were expressed by various people over the authenticity of what Pierre Barthélemi, an obscure cleric from Provence, claimed to be the Holy Lance. He had found this object buried under the floor in the cathedral at Antioch, having been guided to it by a dream. It seems that while things were going well for the troops the authenticity of the lance was accepted but when their fortunes turned, doubts were expressed about whether the lance was, in fact, the weapon which had

<sup>95</sup> 'Solent prudentes huius seculi, cum super negociis belli et pacis deliberant, secundum ea que se uidisse uel audisse meminerunt, multa post futura conicere, et estimata et predicere. Sed in his omnibus et his similibus, in quibus se exercent humana ingenia, incerta est estimatio, non fida certitudo: dubius exitus, et uarius euentus': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 85, p. 433.

<sup>96</sup> It was thought that disgust at the behaviour of the forces he was accompanying hastened Archbishop Baldwin's death at Acre in 1190.

<sup>97</sup> See Alexandru Cizek, 'Die umstrittene Feuerprobe des Kreuzfahrers Pierre Barthélemi in der Diachronie der Wunderberichte', in *La Croisade — Réalités et fictions. Actes du Colloque d'Amiens 18–22 mars 1987*, ed. by Danielle Buschinger, Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik, 503 (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1989), pp. 79–95. See Guillaume de Tyr, *Chronicon*, ed. by R. B. C. Huygens, H. E. Mayer, and G. Röscher, CCCM, 63, 63A (1986).

pierced Christ's side at the Crucifixion. Pierre then offered to prove his case by carrying the lance through a large fire.

Yet the result was inconclusive. Although Pierre walked apparently unscathed through the fire, carrying the lance, he died suddenly a few days later. Guillaume de Tyr explains that some (*quidam*) took this as proof that the lance was a fake, but others (*alii*) explained the death by saying that the huge crowd which surged forward out of devotion when he came through the fire caused such a crush that he afterwards died.<sup>98</sup> Guillaume concludes his account of the incident as follows: 'Thus the matter which was in doubt, since there was no decision, produced more uncertainty.'<sup>99</sup> Here, it seems, what was expected to dispel the doubt was interpreted in opposite ways by different people. So although individual observers may have had their doubts removed, the doubtful *situation*, because of the lack of unanimity, was not resolved. Such proof by ordeal has obvious parallels with the resolution of doubt in a legal setting, to which I shall now turn.

### *Judicial Doubt*

Judicial doubt and the beginnings of the formalization of dispute settlement have been much studied in recent years.<sup>100</sup> Here I wish only to explore the process as it pertains to my overall picture of doubt. Justice was considered to be the prerogative of both spiritual and secular lordships, although the ultimate source of justice was thought to be God. Although justice was thus dispensed via different channels, the church courts and the secular courts were at this time only in the process of developing along particular (and in some cases oppositional) lines. Nor was such development uniform in all areas. For instance, the emergence

<sup>98</sup> '[O]ppresserant et contriverant eatenus, ut vite finem ministrarent': Guillaume de Tyr, *Chronicon*, bk VII, chap. 18, p. 376.

<sup>99</sup> 'Sicque res, que in dubium venerat, nullam recipiens decisionem maius induxit ambiguum': Guillaume de Tyr, *Chronicon*, bk VII, chap. 18, p. 377.

<sup>100</sup> Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Paul R. Hyams, 'Trial By Ordeal: The Key to Proof in the Early Common Law', in *On the Laws and Customs of England: Essays in Honor of Samuel E. Thorne*, ed. by Morris S. Arnold and others (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), pp. 90–126. John Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law: Law and Society in England from the Norman Conquest to Magna Carta* (London: Longman, 1996); James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London: Longman, 1995). For the texts see: Van Caenegem, *English Lawsuits*.

of the distinctive common law in England relatively early in the twelfth century has been variously explained.<sup>101</sup>

In the twelfth century different courts had a range of methods for dealing with doubtful situations. The church courts (partly under the influence of Roman law) favoured witnesses, which included documentary evidence, argument, and exculpatory oaths. Such oaths, often sworn on relics or the Gospels, were in some sense an appeal to God's immanent justice. Sometimes these oaths relied on the punitive powers of the saint on whose relics they were taken, particularly where it was a question of land seen as belonging to the saint, as in disputes over monastic property.<sup>102</sup> An example of a saint defending her property is found in *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*. In Book III, Chapter 17, Siger, a nobleman from the castle of Conques, is described as displaying unremitting hostility towards Sainte Foy. Not only did he steal from the saint's property and harass the monks, but he also mutilated the peasants who worked on her lands (i.e., the lands of the monastery).<sup>103</sup> The compiler of the miracles explains:

Because the senior monks were unable to resist his reckless wickedness by force, they sought the martyr's help with earnest prayers so that she might free them from this most cruel plague. Furthermore, removing the sign of the Lord's victory from its stand, they displayed the cross, together with the reliquary boxes and the blessed martyr's holy image throughout the town. They aroused all the assembled throng so that the holy virgin might incite the wrath of God against the tyrant and preserve her own territories from the raging of this Cyclops.<sup>104</sup>

St Foy obliged and the man was struck down with a mortal illness. Nor did his line survive, as all his children were similarly afflicted.

<sup>101</sup> See Hudson, *Formation*, pp. 19–23.

<sup>102</sup> See Van Caenegem, *Lawsuits*, case 201, where Henry I's writ to the sheriff of Kent concerning lands of St Augustine's, Canterbury reads, 'I command you to see to it that St Augustine and Abbot Hugo shall have all their rents and customs' (quod Sanctus Augustinus et Hugo abbas [...] habeat [...]). For more on the role of saints in monastic disputes see Lester K. Little, *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>103</sup> *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, ed. by Auguste Bouillet, Collection de texts pour servir à l'étude et à l'enseignement de l'histoire, 21 (Paris: Picard, 1897), pp. 156–58.

<sup>104</sup> 'Cujus malignitatis improbitati seniores vi resistere non valentes, sancta martiris suffragia sedulis orationibus implorant, ut ab hac peste liberentur crudelissima. Quin etiam dominicum triumphum a stipite eruentes, in platee circo crucem cum capsis sacraque imagine beate martyris exponunt, omnemque cetum astantium cohortantur, ut sancta virgo adversus illum tyrannum Dei incitet iram, locumque suum ab hujus ciclopi conservet insania. Unde contigit, ut infelix ille miserabili languore percussus, infernalibus penis traderetur puniendus': *Liber miraculorum*, p. 157.

If a determination of guilt or innocence, or who was telling the truth and who was lying, was sought in a legal setting, someone had to make the final decision. Obviously if a proof of the matter in question could be obtained which was generally acceptable to all interested parties, this was the best result. In other cases the onus was on the judge or judges. The judge (or more often the judges) might not always come to the case with an open mind or true doubt as to which way the decision should go. The basis on which judgement could be made seems to replicate the methods used for uncertainty in less weighty matters, although we should bear in mind here the distinction between methods of proof and the manner of deciding whether to accept such putative proof.

### *Oaths*

In almost every kind of legal case oaths were employed at some stage. This method of getting at the truth relied on God to see that justice was done, although the problem here was that God might reserve justice for the next life rather than the present one. An interesting example that illustrates the underlying assumptions about how such oaths functioned can be found in Gerald of Wales's *Topographia Hibernica*. Here an oath falsely sworn on a famous crucifix in Holy Trinity Church, Dublin, is exposed by the crucifix itself, working upon the mental, and indeed physical, health of the young man concerned. As Gerald writes:

A similar thing happened on the staff of Raymond, a constable of earl Richard.<sup>105</sup> A young man of his household stole some iron greaves, and the whole household had purged themselves of the crime by an oath upon the abovementioned cross in the Church of the Holy Trinity. Not long afterwards the young man, having returned from England where he had gone, since no one suspected him of the crime, threw himself, haggard and miserable, at the feet of Raymond. He offered satisfaction for the crime he had committed and asked for pardon. He declared publicly before all that he had been so persecuted by the cross that ever since his perjury it had seemed to hang about his neck with a heavy weight, so that thenceforth he had not been able to sleep or have any rest.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Raymond le Gros was Gerald's cousin.

<sup>106</sup> 'Item Reimundo, comitis Ricardi tunc constabulario, cum juvenis quidam de familia sua ferreas ocreas furto sustulisset, tota ejusdem familia in ecclesia Sanctae trinitatis super crucem praefatam se ab hoc facinore sacramento purgavit. Nec multo post, juvenis ille reversus ab Anglia quo secesserat, nemine de ipso hoc suspicante, ad pedes Reimundi macilentos et miser se prostravit, de scelere perpetrato et satisfactionem offerens, et veniam quaerens. Confessus est etiam palam et publice, se tantam a cruce persecutionem perpressum fuisse, ut post perjurium semper ei in collo gravi cum pondere jacuisse videtur, ita ut nec postmodum dormire, nec requiem ullam habere potuisset': Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, in *Giraldus, Opera*, v, 130.

While we might want to explain this in psychological terms of remorse or a guilty conscience, Gerald seems to take this quite literally as one of the 'manifestations and evidences of its [i.e., the crucifix's] power'.<sup>107</sup>

While it had not at first been suspected in the case related by Giraldus, the problem of perjury was generally recognized. Thus the practice of compurgation, where a number of people had to be found to swear on the accused/plaintiff's account of events came into practice. This was extended in England to a group of people (jury) in what we would call civil matters, who swore as to their knowledge of matters of fact. But some people, and some crimes, were not considered suitable for this method of proof and in such cases a more direct appeal to God was invoked.

### *Ordeal*

A distinctive form of proof in use throughout the twelfth century in Western Europe was the judicial ordeal. Even if this was less favoured in ecclesiastical courts the Church was involved in ordeals in a practical way, as the rituals required the active participation of a priest to bless the instruments, exorcise the water, say preliminary masses, and so on. It is now pretty much agreed that this was a last resort method of proof, to be used for matters for which witnesses were lacking, or in cases where the defendant was not able to produce the required number of supporters (when it was a matter of oaths) or his own oath was not thought to be trustworthy.

Ordeals fall into two classes: unilateral trial by fire or water where one party undertook to prove their case, and bilateral where the parties or their substitutes fought against each other. The circumstances in which the different sorts of ordeal were prescribed varied over time.<sup>108</sup>

### *Unilateral Ordeals: Fire*

The most usual form of ordeal by fire did not directly employ fire itself (as in the case of the Holy Lance) but rather used some form of heated metal. With the trial by hot iron, used for criminal cases in Norman and Angevin England, an iron bar

<sup>107</sup> 'His igitur, aliisque virtutibus, et signis variis [...] Crux ubique veneranda se venerabilem hic exhibuit': Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica*, v, 130.

<sup>108</sup> See Bartlett, *Trial*, pp. 27–28. See also Dominique Barthélemy, 'Diversité des ordalies médiévales', *Revue Historique*, 280 (1988), 3–26.



of a prescribed weight was exorcized, heated, and placed on the altar. Judgement was invoked with a prayer to God at various points in the proceedings.<sup>109</sup> It may be that the drawn-out nature of the preparations allowed plenty of time for a confession. After the person undergoing the ordeal had carried the iron for the required number of paces, the hand was bound up. It was inspected after three days to see whether it was healing cleanly, thus proving innocence.

A second form of ordeal by fire, or rather, heat, as it actually employs water, involved boiling water into which the subject had to plunge his hand, although the follow-up and inspection were similar. This form seems to have been used more on the Continent, although there are similar ordeals prescribed in early Irish law.<sup>110</sup> In all such cases God's judgement is seen to be somewhat delayed and depends on the outcome of the healing process.

### *Unilateral Ordeals: Water*

More direct results could be obtained by the ordeal by water. Once again, the ordeal by water is best documented from Anglo-Norman sources. Various jurisdictions, including some seigneurial lordships, had their own facilities for this ordeal. It comprised a pit, twenty feet long and twelve feet deep, with a platform for the priest, attendants, and judges at one end. After similar adjurations and blessings, the subject was stripped and bound. He or she was then lowered into the water and had to be submerged to a certain depth, for a prescribed time. If the individual could not be submerged to the requisite depth, it was thought that the water had rejected her or him as a sign of guilt.<sup>111</sup> This had the advantage over the ordeal by fire in giving an immediate result, although there might still be room for disagreement over its interpretation.<sup>112</sup> It is tempting to compare this with the more sortilegious methods (like lots or dice) of decision-making studied earlier, since God's judgement was not as directly invoked and the verdict seemed to be

<sup>109</sup> Earlier Germanic forms seem to have involved walking over ploughshares heated to incandescence. See Bartlett, *Trial*, pp. 15–18.

<sup>110</sup> Hyams, *Ordeal*, p. 93 n. 13, seems to suggest that this and the ordeal by morsel (*corsnaed*) were more popular 'outside major centres'.

<sup>111</sup> See Hudson, *Formation*, p. 73 and references cited there.

<sup>112</sup> See for example, the account of the trial by water of two heretics who claimed to have recanted at Vézelay in 1167 in Hugh of Poitiers, *The Vézelay Chronicle*, trans. by John Scott and John O. Ward (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1992), pp. 314–15.



more dependent on the reaction of the water, where 'heads or tails' becomes 'sink or swim'.

### *Bilateral Ordeals*

Ordeal by battle seems to have been introduced by the Normans and was much used in what we might think of now as civil cases. The cooperation of the clergy was also required here to bless the implements used, sharpened stakes and hammers in some cases. Again the result was generally immediate, one party either being killed, wounded so badly that he could not continue, or giving up.<sup>113</sup> There were also cases where the parties got to the point but refused to fight.

### *Institutionalizing Decision-making*

I would like to argue that judicial decisions simply reflect a more institutionalized manner of resolving the secular doubts which we have already discussed. Indeed such methods of proof were sometimes used in nonjudicial contexts. Part of the difference is that the decision was generally not left up to one person. Originally it was made by the suitors to the 'court' however constituted, although the influence of the president of the court should not be underestimated, especially in the case of the king's court or the papal curia. John Hudson also notes that by about 1176 royal justices in eyre were probably taking a more active role in the decision-making or at least guiding juries in their verdicts.<sup>114</sup>

Let us examine how the commonly used ways for dealing with personal doubt are made public and collective. It could be argued that taking counsel is transformed into a collective decision of the suitors to the court. Inner debate or working things out for oneself now becomes rational discussion among the group assessing the reliability of witnesses and testimony in the light of what Hudson calls 'legal norms'.<sup>115</sup>

Appeals to the supernatural still have a place but are reserved for the hardest cases where other means of settlement are lacking. Whereas in a case of individual doubt the person might pray to God for guidance and be answered (or not) in a

<sup>113</sup> Sometimes both gave up and so the result remained inconclusive.

<sup>114</sup> Hudson, *Formation*, p.151.

<sup>115</sup> John Hudson, 'Court Cases and Legal Arguments in England, c. 1066–1166', *TRHS*, ser. 6, 10 (2000), 91–115, especially p. 95.

dream which gives them privileged knowledge of some truth, in the legal setting God's will needed to be publicly revealed, because more than one person had to be convinced. Hence the popularity of the ordeal. The more overt non-Christian forms of decision-making such as lots and soothsayers obviously found no place in Christian courts, ecclesiastical or secular, although, as suggested above, possibly the ordeal by water could be seen in this light. It is, then, interesting to note Peter Cantor's suggestion that the ordeal is just somewhat higher up the slippery-slope from such noncanonical methods.<sup>116</sup> This is not to say that employing such methods would always produce a definite and compelling answer, even in the case of trial by battle. There was still plenty of scope for outside influences on the decision. In a collective decision all sorts of nonjudicial elements might intervene, involving power, favour, and even fraud.

There was, of course, another level of uncertainty present in some complex legal cases, about which trials belonged in which courts and how procedural aspects should be conducted. As with so many other aspects of twelfth-century life, work was in train to clarify and regulate such matters.<sup>117</sup>

### *The Case of Archdeacon Osbert of Richmond*

A case that illustrates various themes touched on above comes from the middle of the twelfth century. The first we hear of it is in a letter of Archbishop Theodore, which was actually written by John of Salisbury, to Pope Adrian IV.<sup>118</sup> He explains:

A clerk of the household of William, Archbishop of York, called Symphorian, in the presence of King Stephen and the bishops and barons of England in solemn council, cited Osbert, Archdeacon of York, on a charge of poisoning, namely that the Archbishop aforesaid was slain by poison [at Mass ...] and he promised steadfastly that he would prove this by the ordeal of white hot iron or boiling water or of single combat or of any other

<sup>116</sup> See John W. Baldwin 'The Intellectual Preparation for the Canon of 1215 against Ordeals', *Speculum*, 36 (1961), 613–36. For Peter's comment see p. 628 n. 90: 'Item hinc [Commentary on Numbers. v] habemus argumentum quod sortes et huiusmodi probationes aque et ferri candentis licite sunt. Quod non est trahendum ad consequenciam, quia facta legis ammiranda et sepe lienda sunt ad opera, nisi fuerunt moralia. Vel sustinuit hoc fieri dominus propter iudeorum maliciam ut libellum repudiū.'

<sup>117</sup> For example, see Linda Fowler-Magerl, '*Ordines iudicarii*' and '*Libelli de ordine iudiciorum*', *Typologie*, 63 (1994).

<sup>118</sup> For the full dossier see *Lawsuits*, no. 520, pp. 571–78.

form of trial. But Osbert most steadfastly denied the charge and replied that by privilege of his dignity and order he was not subject to lay jurisdiction, but only that of the Church, and he was ready whatever happened to abide by its judgement. So both parties gave security that they would pursue their quarrel according to the custom of our nation in the King's hand, who, despite the resistance and opposition of ourselves and our brethren, said that it came under his jurisdiction, owing to the atrocity of the crime and because the case was initiated in his presence: thereupon the dispute was postponed till the Octave of Epiphany.<sup>119</sup>

When Stephen was succeeded by Henry II the bishops managed, not without difficulty, to wrest it from the royal grip and return the case to the church courts. But after the trial had been postponed many times and the matter had become something of a scandal, Theodore took advice from four of his fellow bishops and several other experts in canon law. Then, as Theodore continues,

We ordered the Archdeacon to purge himself of the charge by oath of three archdeacons, who were to choose four other deacons to assist them; and we appointed a day for this purgation. But when the day drew near, the said archdeacon came to us saying that he preferred to prove his innocence before the Roman Church [...] and he placed himself and all that was his under your protection [...]. He added that he will present himself to you on the octave of Epiphany. We therefore, deferring as we should to your apostolic majesty have reserved the settlement of the matter for your holiness.<sup>120</sup>

So even in the mid-twelfth century there was plenty of uncertainty about where a trial should be held (in the king's court or the church courts), how the proof

<sup>119</sup> 'Clericus quidam de familia Willelmi bonae memoriae Eboracensis archiepiscopi, nomine Simphorianus, in praesentia Regis Stephani et episcoporum et baronum Angliae in quodam conventu celebri, Osbertum Eboracensem archidiaconum impetivit super crimine veneficii, quo praedictum archiepiscopum dicebat extinctum veneno [...] promittens constanter se hoc ferri candentis aut ferventis aquae aut monomachiae aut alio iudicio probaturum. Osbertus vero constantissime crimen infitatus, privilegio dignitatis et ordinis se non laicorum sed ecclesiastico tantum iudicio fidejussoribus de lite exequenda juxta consuetudinem gentis nostrae in manu Regis, qui, nobis et fratribus nostris reclamantibus et renitentibus, causam hanc propter atrocitatem criminis et quia, eo praesente, initiata erat ad forum suum pertinere dicebat, in octavas Epiphaniae dilata est controversia': *Lawsuits*, pp. 571–72. This shows incidentally that the problem of criminous clerks antedated the archbishopric of Thomas Becket.

<sup>120</sup> '[I]am dicto archidiacono purgationem indiximus trium manu archidiaconorum, adhibitis secum aliis quattuor diaconis, diem praestandae purgationis praefinientes; qua imminente, accessit ad nos memoratus archidiaconus, dicens se malle innocentiam suam demonstrare in facie ecclesiae Romanae, ad quam verbum forte pervenerat, se et omnia sua vestrae protectioni subiciens, auctoritate apostolica inhibens ne in laesionem ejus quippiam ab aliquo statueretur. Adjecit etiam quod in octavis Epiphaniae se vestro conspectui praesentabit. Nos ergo, ut oportuit, apostolicae majestati deferentes diffinitionem negotii vestrae reservavimus sanctitati': *Lawsuits*, p. 572.

should be made (particularly whether the accuser or the accused should undertake to provide it), and other procedural matters, including the point at which appeals could be made to Rome.<sup>121</sup>

Comments on the case from various contemporaries may or may not illuminate what was going on. One such is a letter from Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of Hereford, in which he points out the danger of false accusations: 'We should not listen to the baleful voices and claims of those who threaten the life and reputation of innocent people without proving their guilt, but try to inflict punishment on them out of malicious spite.'<sup>122</sup> He points out that Symphorian had refused to pursue the case in the ecclesiastical court. He belittles Symphorian's willingness to undertake the ordeal (in a court which was predisposed towards him, it is suggested) in the first place because he knew the Church would not allow it. 'He accused him [Osbert] with the more confidence in the king's court since he understood that this proof [the ordeal] could not be administered lawfully before any judge'.<sup>123</sup>

On the other hand, John of Salisbury wrote at about the same time in 1156, 'Osbert, Archdeacon of York, has failed in his purgation. If anyone suggests otherwise to you, do not believe him.'<sup>124</sup> We hear no more of the matter until 1175–80 in the decretal of Pope Alexander III appointing three judges delegate to conclude the matter. The judgement is not recorded, although Osbert seems to have returned to lay status. The matter is not much clarified by William of Newburgh in his *History*, although his description of how poison was suspected when the Archbishop's teeth started to turn black is almost worthy of Umberto Eco.<sup>125</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux, in his *De consideratione*, bk III, chap. 2, in *SBO*, III, 435–39, denounces appeals made before a trial has been held, as in this case.

<sup>122</sup> 'Funeste namque voces et clammosae precludende sunt his, qui vitam innocentium persequentes et famam, quorum non probant culpam, hos tamen invidiosa malitia trahere moliantur ad penam': See *Lawsuits*, no. 520B, p. 572.

<sup>123</sup> 'Ipsumque ad Regis audientiam eo confidentius provocabat quoad iudicium hoc apud cunctum iudicem de jure celebrare non posse advertebat': *Lawsuits*, p. 573.

<sup>124</sup> 'Osbertus Eboracensis archidiaconus in purgatione defecit. Quisquis vobis suggesserit aliud, non credatis': *Lawsuits*, p. 573.

<sup>125</sup> See *Lawsuits*, pp. 577–78. Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (London: Picador, 1984).

*Doubt about Modes of Proof in Lawsuits*

As Bartlett admits and Peter Cantor shows, there were always doubts about individual examples of the use of the ordeal or of judgements obtained by this method.<sup>126</sup> Such cases have to be distinguished from intellectual doubts about the method per se. Since the mode of seeking justice was generally adversarial/accusatorial there was always the possibility that one party or the other might not receive the decision strictly warranted by the facts of the matter. This could happen under any of the methods used, argumentation, documents, witnesses, compurgation, or ordeal.<sup>127</sup> It has been argued that doubts about the ordeal were increasing in the twelfth century and that the decree of Lateran IV in 1215 virtually outlawing the process by banning clerical participation was a belated rubber stamp.<sup>128</sup> But replacing what had been seen as God's judgement by judicial torture, in matters such as suspected heresy, in order to ensure a confession, can only be seen as a retrograde step.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>126</sup> See Bartlett, *Trial*, pp. 86–89.

<sup>127</sup> For interesting light on why one might prefer a duel over the verdict of a jury see V. H. Galbraith, 'The Death of a Champion (1287)', *Studies in Medieval History Presented to F. M. Powicke*, ed. by R. W. Hunt and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), pp. 283–95.

<sup>128</sup> However, Bartlett (*Trial*, p. 122) argues that the ordeal flourished throughout the twelfth century and beyond. For a late-thirteenth-century English example see Galbraith, 'The Death'.

<sup>129</sup> On the use of the ordeal in cases of suspected heresy see Bartlett, *Trial*, pp. 21–24 and 39–40.



## SPIRITUAL DOUBT

In the last chapter we examined examples of mundane or secular doubt and how they were resolved. However, uncertainties which arose in what we have called the sacred realm were often felt to be more pressing. These might encompass matters of objective or general doubt, being concerned, for instance, with the interpretation of biblical statements. They might also relate more directly and personally to someone's own sense of faith or salvation. While it could be said that most biblical commentaries and treatises on Christian themes were potentially written to allay someone's doubt or questioning, or might even have been written as a result of the author's personal feelings of uncertainty, the following examples are drawn from actual situations, in which certain known persons directed their questions to, or sought answers to their doubts from, other known persons.

### *'Problemata Heloissae'*

To proceed in chronological order, we may first consider the list of questions that Heloise and the nuns of the Paraclete sent to Abelard, their founder and patron some time in the 1130s. In her introduction to the *Problemata*, Heloise frames her request historically with reference to the examples of studying the sacred Scriptures set by Jerome and his disciples Marcella and Asella, thus casting Abelard in a role he is known to have himself adopted towards the convent at the Paraclete. Heloise also explains the psychological effect of encountering such difficulties in their reading of the Scriptures, the more readily to elicit Abelard's reply. Thus she writes:

Disturbed by many questions, we become reluctant in our reading, and because we understand less in the sacred words we are constrained to love them less, while we feel the

labour in which we are engaged is fruitless. Therefore, directing these little questions to you, as disciples to our teacher, as daughters to our father, we prayerfully beseech and beseechingly pray that you will not disdain to turn your attention to solving them at whose exhortation, or rather, command we have expressly undertaken this course of study.<sup>1</sup>

Although Heloise refers to the queries as ‘quaestiunculas’, some are more important than others and most have some wider application than just explanation of the text. From the answers Abelard provides many are seen to have an important ethical dimension. Thus the replies vary from one-liners (21) — ‘What does the Apostle mean when he says “Pray without ceasing”?’; reply: ‘Do not omit to pray any time it is required’ — to several pages, where Abelard, depending heavily on Augustine, provides a mini-treatise on marriage and its dispensations in answer to the question of whether ‘one can sin in a thing which was allowed or even commanded by the Lord’.<sup>2</sup>

Heloise’s motives for sending the questions to Abelard may have been mixed. It is possible that she saw them as a means of maintaining contact with her former lover, quite apart from the desire for enlightenment.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Abelard’s relationship to the convent as founder and advisor, not to mention his intellectual stature, made him the obvious person to turn to. Moreover, in his replies Abelard does not adopt a purely oracular approach. In some cases, at least, he seeks to instruct Heloise and the nuns in the way in which such problems can be solved, exemplifying some of the methods set forth later in the introduction to his *Sic et Non*. It should perhaps be remembered that although Heloise was highly educated and intelligent, her previous experience had not been in the particular methods of reading the sacred texts which Abelard was encouraging.

Sometimes Abelard’s explanations are on the literal level, as in Question 39 about discrepancies in the time frame indicated by Jesus’s prophecy concerning Peter’s denial of him. Abelard first explains how the biblical usage of ‘day’ also includes the corresponding night; then he invokes the general rule that for

<sup>1</sup> ‘[M]ultis quaestionibus perturbatae, pigriores efficimur in lectione, et quod in sacris verbis magis ignoramus, minus diligere cogimur, dum infructuosum laborem sentimus, cui operam damus. Proinde quaestiunculas quasdam discipulae doctori, filiae Patri destinantes, supplicando rogamus, rogando supplicamus, quatenus his solvendis intendere non dedigneris, cujus hortatu, imo et jussu hoc praecipue studium aggressae sumus’: *Problemata Heloissae*, in PL, CLXXVIII, cols 677–730; col. 678.

<sup>2</sup> *Problemata*, qu. 42, col. 273.

<sup>3</sup> The *Problemata* seem to date from the 1130s, while a version of *Sic et Non* was certainly in circulation by 1140.



‘anything [...] spoken of more definitely in one place than in another, it is often fitting to understand the definition also in the place where it was not made’, a rule, he says, that is also employed by unbelievers (*infideles*).<sup>4</sup> He then goes on to reproduce, with acknowledgement, Augustine’s explanation of the difficulty from Book III of *On the Harmony of the Gospels*. Since Abelard does not canvass any possible alternative explanations he is presumably satisfied by Augustine’s.

Another example of how to read the Scriptures relates to parables (Question 12) when Heloise raises a problem about envy, suggested by the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. In this connection he notes: ‘It is known that parables do not so much express the truth of a thing as elucidate its partial similarity to something else, and that they frequently treat historical probability like historical fact’;<sup>5</sup> and later, ‘What is said [...] does not pertain to historical truth according to the letter, but pertains to a similarity imported from another point of view.’<sup>6</sup> More simply, in answer to Question 34 Abelard notes that ‘the sequence of Scripture frequently does not conform to the historical order of events’.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover in the solution to Heloise’s question about the sin against the Holy Ghost (Question 13) Abelard first assembles the different statements on the subject found in the Evangelists, so as to ‘let our premises depend on them, so that the preceding may come to an easier solution’.<sup>8</sup> So doing, he introduces his own solution with the word *aestimo* (at least with regard to ‘the sin against the Son of Man’).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> ‘Consuetudo est Scripturae nomine diei pariter diem et noctem comprehendere’: *Problemata*, col. 720; ‘Cum enim aliquid uno loco magis determinate quam in alio dicitur, saepe determinationem subaudiri oportet, ubi etiam ipsa non ponitur, vel quod alibi est exceptum, diligenter adnotandum, ne falsitas confundat sensum. Quod nec ipsos etiam latet infideles’: *Problemata*, cols 720–21.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Sciendum vero in omni parabola non tam rei vertiatem expressam esse quam ex parte aliqua rei similitudinem inductam esse, et saepe historiae veritati similitudinem quasi rem gestam adjungi’: *Problemata*, col. 693.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Quod ergo de his dicitur, non ad veritatem pertinet rei gestae secundum proprietatem litterae, sed ad similitudinem inductam ex aliqua parte’: *Problemata*, col. 693.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Saepe namque series Scripturae non tenet ordinem historiae’: *Problemata*, col. 716.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Antequam solutionem, prout possumus, ponamus, praemittenda sunt, et ex diversis evangelistis colligenda hujus sententiae verba, et unde ipsa pendeat praemittendum, ut facilius ad solutionem sit perveniendum’: *Problemata*, col. 694.

<sup>9</sup> It seems that the Church did not have a clear ruling on this vexed issue and various writers, including Hildegard and Richard of St Victor, sought to explain the passage. The monks of Villers also raised the problem. Obviously this was a serious question since it was the one sin by definition irremediable. Here Abelard manages to bring in his idea that good pagans will also be saved.

He argues that the sin against the Son of Man (i.e., Christ) is less blameworthy because he can/could only be recognized as such by the 'inspiration of God'. Blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, seems to be a wilful denial, 'knowingly from envy to detract from the goodness of God, who is to be understood as the Holy Spirit, so that the benefits which inubitably come through the Holy Spirit, that is through the grace of divine goodness, are attributed through envy to an evil spirit'.<sup>10</sup> The idea is that the Pharisees knew that Christ's deeds were attributable to the Holy Spirit, even if they did not believe Christ was God, because he was such a good man. But it is not clear how this historical explanation is meant to apply to the present. Would Abelard still hold that those who do not recognize Christ (which would obviously include the Jews) are to be excused?

The question we might want to consider here is what other avenues were open to guide Heloise in her reading. In a monastic situation such problems might have been raised in the evening discussions known as *collationes*, but Heloise was herself the superior of the nuns at the Paraclete and so she turned to her (remoter) superior. We might compare the instruction by Peregrinus of the nun, Theodora, in the *Speculum Virginum*.<sup>11</sup> The alternative would have been for Heloise to consider the written authorities herself. It is unlikely that the library of the Paraclete was extensive at this time, although in Question 34 Heloise refers to the opinion of 'many commentators'. But even if Heloise had access to a range of commentaries, the problem of choosing between them might still have arisen. Moreover, as Peter Dronke suggests:

[I]n some instances [...] Heloise's 'problem' was no purely abstract exegetic one, such as she could have resolved on her own by looking at a standard commentary, but that she was troubled by the human implications of a number of biblical sentences and episodes, and that it was to clarify and resolve this disquiet that she consulted Abelard himself rather than works of reference.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 'Blasphemare vero in Spiritum sanctum, est manifeste bonitate Dei, qui Spiritus sanctus intelligitur ita scienter ex invidia detrahare, ut beneficia, quae per Spiritum sanctum, hoc est divinae bonitatis gratiam non dubitant fieri, per invidiam tribuant maligno Spiritui, sicut Pharisaeo faciebant, dum turbam credentem his quae videbant, miraculis a Christo per invidiam avertere interentur': *Problemata*, col. 695.

<sup>11</sup> See *Listen Daughter: The 'Speculum Virginum' and the Formation of Religious Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Constant J. Mews (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 137.

### *Questions of the Monks of Villers to Hildegard*

By a lucky chance we have a series of questions and answers from some forty years later sent by the monks of the Cistercian house at Villers, in Brabant, to Hildegard von Bingen. It is instructive to compare the circumstances and contents of the two series of questions and answers. One obvious difference concerns the relationship between the questioners and their chosen authority. The monks did not have a personal connection with Hildegard in the same way as Heloise did with Abelard. Their entree to her circle was via Guibert, a monk from the neighbouring monastery of Gembloux, who after a breathless correspondence with Hildegard and a brief visit in 1175 had the good fortune to be on hand in 1177 when she needed secretarial support after the deaths in quick succession of the two men whom she had had to help her. These, her brother Hugo, and a canon from St Stephens in Mainz, had themselves been pressed into service on the death of Hildegard's lifelong secretary and companion, Volmar.

A comparison of the two series makes for interesting reading, especially in the light of what are often seen as competing loci of authority: scholastic and monastic; intellectual and prophetic.

First, what was the basis on which Hildegard was selected as the authority? This is clearly stated in several of their letters. What causes the monks to send their thirty-five questions to Hildegard is the conviction that God 'has illumined you miraculously with a new kind of sanctification, not with the untaught words of human wisdom but with the teaching of the Spirit, and he has filled you with the spirit of understanding'. Accordingly, they ask that 'to the best of your God-given powers you will deign to give us the answers to the appended questions through the love of Jesus Christ'. While we might consider some of the questions rather trivial they conceive of them in a more important light, affirming that (in the words of Luke 1. 77 and 79) Hildegard will thus 'give knowledge of salvation' to those 'who sit in darkness and the shadow of death'.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> This letter from Guibert de Gembloux written in 1176 (Ep. 105, in *Epistolarium*), incorporates the request of the monks of Villers. For the Latin text of the letters from Guibert to Hildegard, which are omitted by Van Acker in *Epistolarium*; see *Guiberti Gemblacensis Epistolae*, ed. by Albert Derolez, CCCM, 66, 2 vols (Letters 1–24), 66A (Letters 25–56) (1988–89): They are *Guiberti*, Ep. 18, pp. 225–34 (*Epistolarium*, Ep. 104); *Guiberti*, Ep. 19, pp. 235–42 (*Epistolarium*, Ep. 105); and *Guiberti* Ep. 20, pp. 243–44 (*Epistolarium*, Ep. 106); 'in te nouum fecit Dominus super terram, in eo quod nouo sanctificationis genere non indoctis humane sapientie uerbis, sed in doctrina Spiritus te mirabiliter illustrauit et spiritu intelligentie repleuit, ut per incerta et occulta sapientie sue fidelibus aperiret, reuerentie tue pedibus aduoluti

Although Heloise writes that her questions arose from real doubts encountered while studying the Scriptures, there is a suggestion in Guibert's letter that the monks of Villers were more excited by Hildegard's celebrity status since when they heard about her, 'their spirits were enkindled with such great ardor to learn from you that they unanimously formulated the appended questions for you to resolve for them.' Of course, this does not necessarily imply that they were not already puzzled by the questions they addressed to Hildegard.<sup>14</sup>

Guibert, in passing on the letter, did not forbear to add his own instructions to the seer. He realizes that the questions are not all of the same level of difficulty and adds, somewhat patronizingly:

It will, of course, be up to your judgement to sort out — and therefore touch upon briefly — the easier questions or those already discussed by the Fathers from the more obscure ones not yet fully elucidated that will require more of your attention, such as those concerning the soul, or those that deal with the distinction between the *nativity* of the Son and the *procession* of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

He also warns her several times not to mistake her own thoughts or understanding on the matters for the inspiration of God. Hildegard replied to a follow-up letter sent by Guibert that she has begun working on the questions but she has been hindered by illness, loss of secretarial support, and administrative duties.<sup>16</sup> Guibert sends another letter thanking her for the book she has sent (presumably in the hope that this will answer some of the questions) but renews his request for elucidation of what he refers to as 'secrets, mysteries and

sanctitatem tuam affectuose rogamus'; 'sedemus in tenebris et umbra mortis': *Guiberti*, Ep. 19, p. 236. For an English translation of Hildegard's letters (following the Van Acker edition) see *The Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, trans. by Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman, 3 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994–2004).

<sup>14</sup> '[...] eorum animos quedam abs te sciscitandi ardor tantus accendit, ut, secundum quod mente singuli mouebantur, statim subscriptas questiones in unum compingerent [...] a te enodandas': *Guiberti*, Ep. 19, p. 236. Was their approach to Hildegard a combination of laziness and celebrity seeking — a medieval parallel to an undergraduate going online and asking 'an authority' in the field for the answer that the student might have been able to find in a general textbook?

<sup>15</sup> 'Discretionis autem tue erit faciliores et olim a patribus discussas secernere et summatim perstringere, obscuriores uero et necdum ad liquidum propolatas, ut sunt ille de anima et de differentia natiuitatis Filii et processione Spiritus Sancti, et cetera in hunc modum, diu uersando et reuoluendo ad notitiam etiam mediocrum in lucem producere': *Guiberti*, Ep. 19, pp. 236–37. For this question see Baird and Ehrman, *Letters*, 105, II, 38.

<sup>16</sup> Baird and Ehrman, *Letters*, 106r, II, 40–41; *Epistolarium*, pp. 265–68 (text).

other great matters'.<sup>17</sup> This is followed by another request for answers where Hildegard is addressed in fulsome terms likening her to the Virgin Mary.<sup>18</sup> Still, the answers failed to appear. Somewhat later in the year Guibert addressed a letter to the nuns of Rupertsberg, having heard a rumour that Hildegard had died. He thanks them for sending Hildegard's *Liber uitae meritorum*. But his main concern seems to be the fate of the questions.<sup>19</sup>

In his next letter, sent in 1177, although overjoyed to find Hildegard is still alive, he continues to press her to get on with answering the questions 'while you have life and wisdom'. In her reply she reveals that 'because of the press of my affairs and because of the great infirmity that I have suffered [...] I have answered only fourteen [...] so far'. She promises that she 'will work gladly' on the others.<sup>20</sup> And that is all that the correspondence between Hildegard and Guibert tells us of the matter since from 1177 Guibert was actually at Rupertsberg, where he remained for some time after her death in 1179. No doubt the importance of such questions paled somewhat when Guibert could drink daily from her words. However, we do hear more of the questions in letters between Guibert and Radulphus (Raoul) of Villers [Ep. 25] who writes in 1178 or 79 complaining of Guibert's long stay in Rupertsberg, adding the inevitable enquiry about the questions sent to Hildegard, and with what might seem incredible cheek (or optimism) sending another thirty-three for her to answer.<sup>21</sup>

By this stage Guibert seems to have understood better what the likelihood of getting the kinds of answers they expected from Hildegard in fact was. In a letter of reply, nine-tenths of which is devoted to a defence of his integrity in tarrying so long among the nuns at Rupertsberg, he explains the situation. He also relates that Wezelin, Hildegard's nephew, had taken the questions and answers, although possibly only in a provisional form, inscribed on a 'rotula' away with him to Cologne. On his death, they could not be found even after an extended search.

<sup>17</sup> '[D]e secretis et mysticis et rebus maximis ad sanctitatem tuam scripta direximus': Baird and Ehrman, *Letters*, 107, II, 42–43; *Guiberti*, Ep. 21, pp. 245–47.

<sup>18</sup> Baird and Ehrman, *Letters*, 108, II, 43–44; *Guiberti*, Ep. 22, pp. 248–50 (text).

<sup>19</sup> Baird and Ehrman, *Letters*, 108a, II, 44–46; *Guiberti*, Ep. 33, pp. 251–53.

<sup>20</sup> 'quoad uiuis et sapis': Baird and Ehrman, *Letters*, 109, II, 46–48; text *Guiberti*, Ep. 24, p. 254–57; 'Sed quadam scriptura quam inceptam nondum compleui, occupata sum, et etiam pre nimia infirmitate qua diu ex uoluntate Dei detenta fui, tantum quattuordecim solutiones earundem questionum perscripsi, et quantum per gratiam Dei potuero, in aliis libenter laboro': Baird and Ehrman, *Letters*, 109r, II, 48–49; *Epistolarium*, pp. 269–71.

<sup>21</sup> *Guiberti*, Ep. 25, pp. 264–69. The questions include a mixture of scriptural, natural history and moral questions (including Ep. 28 on suicides).

It is in the face of this fact, and presented with yet another list of questions, that Guibert suggests alternate methods for finding the answers.<sup>22</sup>

So how does all this influence the way we read his advice to the monks of Villers that they should consult the Masters of France? It has been suggested that this is an ironic response.<sup>23</sup> But because it is presented as a last-ditch possibility after trying the expedient of consulting books for themselves, I am inclined to think that it is in earnest. It would certainly accord with the monks' notion of the epistemological pecking order.<sup>24</sup>

Many of the monks' questions were concerned with the relationship between the spiritual and the material worlds, such as the difference between spiritual and physical eyes and sight; the nature of the fires of hell; the location of paradise; whether Samuel was actually called back to life by the sorceress, and so forth. There is a more general question (32) about how parables are to be understood, which we may compare with Heloise's Question 21. 'What is the meaning of "length," "height" and "depth" in Ephesians?' [3. 18] is also a question asked by Heloise. Question 35 about the nature of the bodies of the saints who appear to people after death is one that also exercised the author of the *Vita* of Hermann Joseph of Steinfeld.<sup>25</sup>

That consulting Hildegard need not be seen in the context of a struggle between monastic and scholastic methodologies is also suggested by the fact that Master Odo of Soissons, later Abbot of Ourscamp, and finally Bishop of Tusculum, himself consulted the seer.<sup>26</sup> He wrote: 'Since many maintain that God is not both paternity and divinity do not hesitate to explain and transmit to us what you perceive about it from above.'<sup>27</sup> Odo was present at the Synod of Trier (1147/8) which recognized Hildegard's prophetic gift and encouraged her to finish the *Scivias*. Dronke suggests his letter was written in anticipation of the examination of Gilbert of Poitiers at the Council of Reims in 1148. In her letter

<sup>22</sup> See Guiberti, Ep. 26, pp. 270–94.

<sup>23</sup> See Anne Clark Bartlett, 'Commentary, Polemic, and Prophecy in Hildegard von Bingen's *Solutiones Triginta Octo Quaestionum*', *Viator*, 23 (1992), 153–65, (p. 155). The phrase is actually 'alicui magistrorum Francie peritissimo', which would probably indicate that Paris was what Guibert had in mind.

<sup>24</sup> For Volmar's attitude to the schools see Baird and Ehrman, *Letters*, 195, II, 168–69.

<sup>25</sup> *Vita B. Hermannii Josephi*, in *AASS*, 1 Apr, chap. 1, p. 685.

<sup>26</sup> As Anne Clark Bartlett suggests in 'Commentary, Polemic, and Prophecy'.

<sup>27</sup> '[Q]uoniam plurimi contendunt quod paternitas et diuinitas Deus non sit, quid inde in celestibus sentias nobis exponere et transmittere non differas': *Epistolarium*, Ep. 40, p. 103.

of reply Hildegard uses parable and analogy to convey her meaning. Even if the detail is not exactly clear she states boldly: 'Whoever denies that God is paternity and divinity denies God.' Furthermore, in a strikingly original image she aligns herself with those who were against applying the new methods of linguistic argument to aspects of the deity when she proclaims:

For God cannot be winnowed nor strained through a sieve by human argument, because there is nothing in God that is not God. And since creation has a beginning, it follows that human reason discovers God through names, for reason itself, by its very nature, is well supplied with names.

### *Peter of Blois*

That the same sorts of doubt were being felt a generation later can be seen from the collection of the later letters of Peter of Blois (c. 1125–1212).<sup>28</sup> Since his audience is different, consisting of a broader clerical community (rather than simply monks or practising schoolmen), many of the questions deal with moral theology. Thus Letter 28, *Theologice questiones aut potius conquestiones de diversitate sectarum*, has five parts, three dealing with sin, the fourth with the question of whether someone having one virtue has them all and conversely for the vices, and the fifth concerning grace. Letter 29 has twenty-two parts, mostly dealing with questions relating to the Last Judgement, many involving conflicting biblical accounts, such as VIII, 'Concerning the nature of the elements after judgement.'<sup>29</sup> Other questions from a range of correspondents concern lying (Ep. 55 to the Archdeacon of Durham) matrimony (Ep. 57 to Archdeacon Henry of Chartres); confession and penance (Ep. 61 to master R, Archdeacon of Dorset); Mosaic law (Ep. 64 to Prior of Newburgh)). In one of his replies Peter explains that if he cannot himself unravel the difficulties of the questions he will take his answers from the sacred authorities or sentences of the masters.<sup>30</sup> However, these

<sup>28</sup> *The Later Letters of Peter of Blois*, ed. by Elizabeth Revell, *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi*, 13 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, for the British Academy, 1993). Most of the letters date from the period after he became Archdeacon of London in 1199. There were two twelfth-century writers called 'Peter of Blois', probably uncle and nephew. The Peter in question here is the younger. See further Southern, *Scholastic*, II, 178–218.

<sup>29</sup> See Revell, *Letters*, pp. 146–56. These questions had been put by the Abbot of Coggeshall, either Thomas (1194–1207), or his successor Ralph, the historian (1207–18).

<sup>30</sup> '[Q]uod si omnium difficultates enodare non potero questionum, sufficit michi pro solutionibus assignare sanctorum auctoritates aut sententias magistrorum': Revell, *Letters*, p. 147.



‘masters’ were more likely to have been those he studied under in the Paris of c. 1155–65 rather than the current crop. Indeed, his Letter 3, he complains to Pope Innocent III about those who raise all sorts of irrelevant and irreverent questions with regard to transubstantiation.<sup>31</sup>

What is interesting here is that the questions seem to be increasingly detached from their biblical (and monastic) foundations, thus paralleling a movement we shall see in Chapter 5, below. So Heloise says her questions arise from the nuns’ reading of the Bible; the monks of Villers’ questions are more loosely based on the Bible and Peter’s correspondents’ questions are often wholly detached from it.

### *Doubts Concerning Church Ritual*

So far we have seen how questions pertaining to the spiritual realm might be solved by resort to the advice of others, whether they were seen as having greater expertise or, as in the case of Hildegard, more direct access to God. Apart from matters of biblical interpretation and *Heilsgeschichte*, doubts sometimes arose in the context of the sacraments and aspects of church ritual. This was a realm in which the Church had already taken steps to set out guidelines, as in the decisions of various local and general synods. The *Decretum* went some way towards sorting out various ‘doubtful’ cases. Thus we find if there is ‘doubt about whether someone has been baptized or not, he should be baptized; if he had not previously been baptized the grace of baptism will result, but if he had been baptized he will receive nothing from the second anointing’. The idea here is that it is better to err on the side of caution.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> He contrasts his own anxious questions (‘ex singultuosa mei cordis anxietate’) with the ‘garrulitate ranarum logices’; Revell, *Letters*, p. 19. The fact that the Pope seems only occasionally to have been consulted directly on spiritual questions suggests that the underlying assumptions of the doctrine of Papal Infallibility enunciated in 1870 (viz. that inerrancy attaching to the office of the pope in matters of faith and morals has always been recognized) are not strongly supported by twelfth-century practice. Indeed Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard von Bingen were more inclined to write letters of admonition or instruction to popes than to consult them on spiritual matters. In the case of canon law, however, the pope was considered the ultimate authority.

<sup>32</sup> [S]icut de quo dubium est, an sit baptizatus an non, debet baptizari: qui si prius baptizatus non fuerat, consequitur gratiam baptismi, si autem baptizatus erat, nichil accipit in secunda unctione, nec pertinet hoc ad reiterationem baptismi, sed ad cautelam salutis: *Decretum*, dist. 68, canon 2, I, col. 254.



Difficulties might also arise in the performance of the Mass. These were often deeply felt, in proportion to the perceived solemnity of the undertaking. Although Hermann Joseph's scruples with regard to the Mass were considered extreme by his hagiographer — he is reported never to have thrown away his fingernail parings or moustache trimmings since they may have come in contact with the body and blood of the Lord when officiating at the altar — it gives some idea of the awe with which the ceremony was generally approached.<sup>33</sup> This is illustrated by a story from Peter of Cornwall's (c. 1139–1221) book of *Visions* concerning an incident in which his uncle was involved as a priest:<sup>34</sup>

When Bernard was once celebrating Mass and holding in his hands the chalice already consecrated to the Lord, it happened that a spider fell into the chalice. At which he was at first horrified, his thoughts fluctuating with doubt in opposite directions; he swiftly pulled himself together and calling on the merits of his patron regained his courage. Invoking the mercy and help of blessed Stephen [...] he boldly drank down all that was in the chalice. And since he trusted implicitly in the Lord and in blessed Stephen and placed his soul in their care he never afterwards suffered any harm from drinking the spider.<sup>35</sup>

In fact, we are told that the spider emerged from his little toe some time later.<sup>36</sup>

### *Questions of Personal Faith*

Examples of spiritual doubt can be found throughout the period, sometimes expressed obliquely, and less often, as in the cases of Otloh and Herbert of Bosham, more directly. Several examples of doubt concerning matters of personal faith

<sup>33</sup> 'Illorum digitorum ungues, quibus sacra Hostia contrectatur, et superioris labii barbam ori proximam, qua aliquo casu contingi posset Calicis Sacramentum, forfice solebat praescindere, et propter Sacramenti reverentiam conservare apud se': *Vita B. Hermanni Josephi*, chap. 36, p. 697.

<sup>34</sup> Peter of Cornwall was prior of Holy Trinity, Aldgate. His sprawling collection of visions (mostly relating to the afterlife) was compiled between 1200 and 1206 and is largely unpublished; see *Liber revelationum*, London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 51.

<sup>35</sup> 'Predictus quoque Bernardus dum tempori aliquam missam celebraret et iam calicem domini consecratum manibus teneret contigit ut aranea in calicem decideret. Quod ipse primo exhorruit sed cogitationes suas dubie in diversa primus fluctuantes. Cito in unum recollegit et pro meritis patris sui audaciam resumens et misericordiam et auxilium beati Stephani cuius se sciebat servum nativum et quem pro omnibus sanctis familiaritate quadam colebat invocans hausit totum quid erat in calice intrepidus et quia in domino et in beato Stephano omnino confidit in eorum auxilio animam suam posuit numquam postea ex aranee haustu lesionem sesit': *Liber revelationum*, fol. 25<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> 'Unde ad ignem se applicans iussit unum servientum suorum illum digitum in quo prurigitem sensit scalpere [...] donec rupta pelle sanguinem extraheret et cum sanguine predicta aranea viva ab intus foras erumperet': *Liber revelationum*, fol. 25<sup>v</sup>.

occur in the rich deposit of Caesarius von Heisterbach's miracles. Significantly, as we will see with Otloh, many occur in the section of his work entitled *Of Temptations*.<sup>37</sup>

One of the obvious sites of spiritual doubt or uncertainty concerned the fate of one's own soul. It was all very well for the creed to outline the things necessary for salvation, but these were not sufficient. However, I am not concerned here so much with the theology of salvation as with the manner in which uncertainties about it were experienced by people in the twelfth century.<sup>38</sup> While there was a generalized fear of not measuring up, Caesarius mentions a monk who believed he could not be saved because he was illegitimate (bk IV, chap. 31).<sup>39</sup> He was eventually reassured by a dream in which he was transported to a large hall, crammed with a multitude of people. A voice assured him that although all those he saw had been born in wedlock no one there would be saved except himself.

In Book 4, Chapter 41, Caesarius writes of a laybrother who, overcome by despair, drowned himself in a fishpond. He had not lost his faith entirely but claimed, 'I cannot say my prayers as I used to and so I fear hell'; since nothing could lift his spirits (his case seems to have been badly handled by his superior) he eventually took his own life.<sup>40</sup> In such circumstances Caesarius makes an

<sup>37</sup> This section is structured around examples of vices and various ways in which they might be avoided or overcome. Especially relevant to those living a monastic life was 'accidie'. Various kinds of psychological states come under this heading, as Caesarius says: 'Accidia est ex confusione mentis nata tristitia, sive taedium, et amaritudo animi immoderata, qua iocunditas spiritalis exstinguitur, et quodam desperationis praecipitio mens in semetipsa subvertitur. Accidiae propaggines sunt malitia, rancor, pusillanimitas, desperatio, torpor circa praecepta, evagatio mentis circa illicita' (Accidie is dejection or weariness born of a troubled mind and extreme inner bitterness, by which spiritual happiness is snuffed out, and the mind is turned upside down by the headlong rush of despair. The progeny of accidie are malice, rancour, faint-heartedness, desperation, sluggishness concerning orders and straying of the mind to illicit things): Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 27 (I, 197). For more on the psychological aspects of doubt, see Chapter 4, below.

<sup>38</sup> Activities such as endowing churches, having monks pray for you and your family, holding memorial masses, and the idea of purgatory in general, were intended as antidotes for some of the uncertainty.

<sup>39</sup> 'Immiserat enim diabolus quandam desperationem cordi eius, ita ut diceret: Quia non es filius legitimi thori, non eris heres coelestis regni. Quae cogitatio in corde eius adeo creverat, ut a confessoribus tam de scripturis quam de exemplis prolatam nullam prorsus reciperet consolationem': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 31 (I, 202).

<sup>40</sup> 'Non quidem dubitavit in fide, sed tantum desperavit de salute. Nullus scripturarum auctoritatibus poterat erigi, nullis exemplis ad spem veniae reduci [...]. Non possum dicere, sicut

interesting distinction between suicide when mad and suicide through *tristitia* or *desperatio*.<sup>41</sup> The underlying idea, also in the writings of Hildegard, is that in the latter cases the will was involved in entertaining or embracing despair rather than rejecting it.

Thus such despair was sometimes seen as indicative of reprobation. Bernard of Clairvaux wrote in Ep. 32: 'Just as with the saints and elect *trouble makes for endurance, endurance for testing, testing for hope and hope does not fail*, by contrast, with the damned and reprobate trouble makes for faint-heartedness, faint-heartedness for anxiety, anxiety for despair and that is the end.'<sup>42</sup> Such a view might explain why fewer people wrote to Bernard about their anxieties than to Hildegard, who wrote in Book II of *Scivias* that she heard God declare, 'Therefore let no one despair because of the weight of his iniquity; for if he despairs of My mercy, he shall not rise again to life. But, he who struggles with despair and at last reduces it to nothing has delivered himself, for in being strong, he has manfully conquered.' Earlier in Book II, she writes that God had asserted:

And if the blackest storms of blasphemous despair fall on anyone, and he does not consent to them in his heart or his will or the relish of perverted taste but suffers great torment in the struggle, then if he perseveres in the contest and fights back strongly, I will quickly help him. And let him not doubt because of these trials, for I declare him to be an excellent warrior against the greatest of storms, and I will help him most speedily and hold him as my friend since, patiently enduring such great hardships, he has nobly conquered for love of Me.<sup>43</sup>

consuevi, orationes meas, et ideo timeo gehennam.[...] Positus in infirmitorio, quodam mane ad mortem praeparatus ad magistrum suum venit dicens: Non possum diutius contra Deum pugnare. Illo verba eius minus considerante, ad piscinam monasterio proximam abiit, et in eam se praecipitans suffocatus est': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 41 (I, 210–11).

<sup>41</sup> 'Si sola tristitia et desperatio, non phrenesis, aut mentis alienatio, in causa fuit, haud dubium quin damnati sint. De furiosis et fatuis, in quibus ratio non vivit, quaestio non est quin salventur, quocunque modo moriantur, si tamen prius habuerunt caritatem': Caesarius von Heisterbach *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 44 (I, 212).

<sup>42</sup> '[S]icut sanctis et electis *tribulatio operatur patientiam, patientia probationem, probatio spem, spes autem non confundit* [Romans 5. 4], sic damnandis et reprobis tribulatio parit e contrario pusillanimitatem, pusillanimitas perturbationem, perturbatio desperationem, et illa interimit': Ep. 32, in *SBO*, VII, 87.

<sup>43</sup> 'Quapropter nemo de ponderibus iniquitatis suae desperet; quoniam si de misericordia mea desperauerit, ad uitam non resurget. Qui autem cum desperatione certauerit et tandem eam ad nihilum deduxerit, hic se liberauit, quia fortis existens uiriliter uicit': *Scivias*, bk II, vis. 6, chap. 86, p. 297; 'Si autem nigerrimae tempestates huius blasphemiae et desperationis super quempiam hominem ceciderint, et ipse nec in corde suo nec in uoluntate sua nec in sapore peruersi gustus eis

Thus Hildegard could also send a bracing letter to Rumunda, a laysister at the Abbey of Kitzingen, which concludes: 'Why do you have doubts as if you were not among the saved? Seek, then, God in the anxiety and anguish of your spirit, and you will live.'<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand some people were held to be insufficiently doubtful. Caesarius has a warning about delayed penitence in Book II, Chapter 14, where he remarks that deathbed penitence is 'mighty uncertain' (*tam incertam*).

### *Examples of Partial Doubt*

Caesarius also tells of scholar who could not believe in the glorification of the body after death. 'A certain master of Paris', he wrote,

lying sick in bed, when he thought of the glorification of bodies, and doubtful in his heart, said, how can it be that the fragile and putrid body, could shine in future like the sun? He looked at his feet which he had raised from the bedclothes. And behold such a great splendour proceeded from them that his eyes were struck and he could not look at them. And as soon as he returned to himself he gave thanks to Christ by whose virtue he was drawn back to faith in the resurrection before he died.<sup>45</sup>

This tale provokes the Novice to ask how the eyes of those witnessing such glory will stand it, to which the Master replies, 'As Augustine says, their power will be very different from now, for they too will be glorified.'<sup>46</sup>

consenserit, sed in hoc certamine ualde cruciatur, tunc si in eodem agone fortiter repugnans perseuerauerit, citius ei subuenio; et propter has grauedines non dubitet, quia contra maximas procellas eum fortissimum pugnatorem dico et eum uelocius iuuabo atque eum amicum meum habebo, quoniam propter amorem meum tantas aduersitates patienter sustinens nobiliter superauit': bk II, vis. 5, chap. 58, p. 222. Hildegard also notes the argument against suicide is that once dead you cannot do penance for killing one of God's creatures (i.e., oneself).

<sup>44</sup> 'Cur dubitas quasi non sis in saluatione? Quere ergo Deum in angustia et in dolore anime tui, et uiues': *Epistolarium*, Ep. 152, p. 340.

<sup>45</sup> 'Magister quidam parisiensis infirmatus, cum de glorificatione corporum cogitaret, et haesitans in corde suo diceret, quomodo poterit esse ut corpora ista fictilia et putrida lucere possint in futuro sicut sol, ad pedes suos quos de operimento erexerat, respexit. Et ecce tantus splendor de illis exiuit, ut oculi eius reverberati eos intueri nequirent. Moxque ad se reversus gratias egit Christo, cuius virtute antequam moreretur ad fidem resurrectionis reductus est': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk XII, chap. 54 (II, 358).

<sup>46</sup> 'Ut dicit Augustinus, longe erunt tunc alterius potentiae quam modo, nam et ipsi glorificabuntur': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk XII, chap. 54 (II, 358).

### *Eucharistic Doubts*

Caesarius has an entire section (Book IX, with sixty-seven chapters) on 'The Body and Blood of Christ'. The Eucharistic visions he describes are explicitly said to 'strengthen faith' where debate is inappropriate or even dangerous: 'Where faith alone is operative and the judgement of reason is excluded, discussion cannot be held without danger.'<sup>47</sup> While most of them can be read as exemplary in a general sense, some are described as occurring in response to the explicit doubt of an individual.<sup>48</sup> Thus Chapter 5 concerns a priest who, when he came to the canon of the Mass, felt doubt about the sacrament and was shown raw flesh on the altar. Widekin, a nobleman who was standing behind the priest, also saw it and asked the priest what he had been thinking at the time. Terrified, both by the vision and the question, the priest confessed his doubts. They both described what they had seen and this was passed on to Caesarius through a relative who was Abbess of Rheindorf.<sup>49</sup>

A similar occurrence is described in Chapter 18, where Heylard, the priest of Wuninsdorp, is said to have doubted the real presence due to the perilous promptings of the Devil.<sup>50</sup> Caesarius glossed the experience (somewhat elliptically) as follows: 'As if the Lord were to say to him: if you do not believe in the sacrament I will teach you the truth by experience. And since faith is the way to sight; the bloody sight will bring you to faith.'<sup>51</sup> Chapter 22 concerns a female doubter.

<sup>47</sup> '[Q]uia ubi sola fides operatur, et rationis iudicium excluditur, non sine periculo discutitur': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IX, Prologus (II, 164).

<sup>48</sup> While the name of the priest who doubted is withheld, others involved are named and thus the incident is given particularity.

<sup>49</sup> '[S]acerdos quidam de sacramento corporis Christi dubitans, in castro cui nomen est Wickindisburg celebravit. Qui cum in canone de tam mirabili conversione panis in corpus Christi satis haesitaret, Dominus ei in hostia carnem crudam ostendit. Hanc cum vidisset etiam vir nobilis Widekinus, stans post tergum eius, dicta missa sacerdotem in partem traxit, et quid infra canonem egerit vel cogitaverit diligenter inquisivit. Ille vero tam de visione quam de interrogatione territus, confessus est et non negavit se eadem hora de sacramento dubitasse. Et retulit uterque alteri se crudam carnem in hostia vidisse. Idem Widekinus filiam habet Syfridi de Runkel in coniugio, filiam sororis Abbatissae de Rindorp, quae mihi anno praeterito eandem visionem recitavit': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IX, chap. 5 (II, 170).

<sup>50</sup> 'ex immissione diaboli periculose': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IX, chap. 18 (II, 179).

<sup>51</sup> 'Ac si ei diceret Dominus: Si non credis sacramento, veritatem discas experimento. Et cum fides via sit ad speciem [II Cor. 5. 7], species haec sanguinea te reducat ad fidem': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IX, chap. 18 (II, 179).

It happened that a priest of the diocese of Cologne while celebrating Mass spilt some wine on the corporal which then took the form of blood. Subsequently all efforts to wash it out failed and the priest, thoroughly terrified, took the problem to Rudolph, scholasticus of Cologne. He suspects that the stain persists in order to strengthen faith, and enquires: 'Is there anyone in your parish who has doubts about the sacrament? And the priest replied, There is a certain recluse who is a frequent doubter.'<sup>52</sup> The priest was then advised to show the cloth to the recluse in order to convince her of the real presence. Caesarius concluded: 'This being done, the woman was greatly frightened and believed and God immediately restored the original colour to the cloth.'<sup>53</sup>

Although these accounts are often quite circumstantial we may suspect that some have been invented or at least embellished for exemplary purposes. Yet real examples of Eucharistic doubts can also be inferred from the correspondence of Hildegard, although often somewhat obliquely.

In her letter to Abbot Wolfard of Albon (Ep. 46) she writes: 'But you still hesitate to break the bread which you really wish to eat at the prompting of your mind. How and why do you circle around, sifting through various things and searching everywhere to find out where the reality is to be found in the sacrament?'<sup>54</sup> In Letter 89, to the monk Rudeger, she seems to be alluding to a similar problem when she assures him that 'He Who made flesh and blood in the womb of the Virgin also makes the bread and wine on the altar flesh and blood in this way' and concludes: 'Now, I also see that you, in the lifting up of your hands, are like a shifting cloud on account of the variety of your many thoughts, which sometimes cause you to doubt. Put this aside and recognize who He is, who works His works on the altar.'<sup>55</sup>

<sup>52</sup> 'Estne aliquis in parochia vestra, qui de hoc sacramento dubitet? Respondit sacerdos: Est quaedam inclusa, quae frequenter inde dubitat': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk 9, chap. 22 (II, 181).

<sup>53</sup> 'Quod cum factum fuisset, expavit mulier et credidit, et Deus statim pristinum colorem in lintheo reformavit': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IX, chap. 22 (II, 181).

<sup>54</sup> 'Sed tamen dubitas cibum illum frangere, quem tu ipse comedere uis indicante mente tua. Quomodo et quare circuis diuersa cribrando et undique aspiciendo, ubi inueniatur res illa que in cerimonia sit?': *Epistolarium*, Ep. 46, p. 115.

<sup>55</sup> 'Et qui in utero Virginis carnem et sanguinem fecit, ille etiam in altari panem et uinum ita modo carnem et sanguinem facit. Nunc autem uideo et te in eleuatione manuum tuarum similem uicissitudini nubium propter uarietatem multarum cogitationum, ita quod aliquando dubitas. Et hoc dimitte, et uide quis ille sit qui opera sua in altari operatur': *Epistolarium*, Ep. 89, p. 214.

A further example of Eucharistic doubt comes from the *De miraculis* of Peter the Venerable (c. 1094–1156). In Book I, Chapter 8, a doubting brother, after beseeching Mary to help him, is confirmed in his faith by a vision. In it he is commanded to take up from the altar the Christ child, in the form of a one-year-old baby, and carry him length of the choir. Having done so he affirms: 'From that day my heart was released from every temptation by which it was troubled so that no vestige of disquiet remained in it. Henceforth I maintained faith in the sacrament of salvation with unshaken firmness.'<sup>56</sup> Peter does not supply any names here, although he claims to have the stories on good authority.

### *Human Counsel*

Even for doubts concerning matters of personal salvation, a human intermediary seems to be preferred to a direct approach to God. Thus Provost G. from St Victor of Mainz in a letter to Hildegard accuses himself of having 'fallen into abominable iniquity, both in thought and deed'. He requests Hildegard 'please to inform me whether I have any hope for salvation: am I predestined for life or foreknown for death?' It seems that in this case Hildegard wisely refrained from replying.<sup>57</sup>

As mentioned earlier, fewer religious (or laypersons for that matter) seemed anxious to confide their doubts about personal salvation to Bernard of Clairvaux. The only letter that might treat such a case seems to be a third-person enquiry. Letter 468, addressed to the canons of Châtillon, states, in words reminiscent of Hildegard when she was asked similar questions,

And because it is not right that it [i.e. your love] when we know it is anxious should remain in anxiety for too long, we bear witness to you that if our Stephen, who is also yours, should crown the good beginning he has made with a worthy end, if he should endeavour to complete his sacrifice by offering the tail with the head of his victim, he will bring forth the acceptable fruit of penance.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> 'Ab illo die ita cor meum omni qua vexabar temptatione vacuatum est, ut nec vestigium in eo preterite conturbationis remaneret, fidemque salutaris sacramenti, inconcussa stabilitate retineret': Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis libri duo*, ed. by Dyonisia Bouthillier, CCCM, 83 (1988), pp. 33–34.

<sup>57</sup> 'Nam sepius abominabili iniquitate tam factis quam cogitationibus lapsus sum [...] scire faciatis an mihi sit spes salutis, an predestinatus sim ad uitam aut prescitus ad mortem': *Epistolarium*, Ep. 165, p. 371.

<sup>58</sup> 'Sed quoniam non dignum est ipsam, unde sollicitam esse cognovimus, diutius manere sollicitam, Stephanus vester, qui et noster, si digno suae conversationis initia fine compleverit, si

His letter to Thomas of Beverley (who had promised to become a monk at Clairvaux but was dragging his feet) suggests, not surprisingly, that full conversion to the monastic life is almost a prerequisite for salvation.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand Hildegard holds out hope of salvation for various pious laypeople in her correspondence and clearly gives them hope of salvation in *Scivias*.<sup>60</sup>

### *More or Less Total Loss of Faith*

Caesarius also has examples of people, including two women, who displayed more radical doubts. Book IV, Chapter 39, concerns 'a young recluse who doubted the existence of God and the angels and was taken out of her body and in the spirit saw angels and souls, and then returned to the body'.<sup>61</sup> The original cause of her problem was envy on the part of the devil who assailed her with various temptations including faintheartedness, bodily wasting, and sluggishness in prayer.<sup>62</sup> Luckily she was not without spiritual counsel and the abbot who visited her, though shocked to find her uttering such thoughts as 'Who knows if God exists, if there are angels with him, or souls or the Kingdom of Heaven?'<sup>63</sup> suggested that she stick it out for another week, meanwhile calling upon the prayers of various monasteries and himself praying to God for her. On his return, a week later, their combined prayers had been answered. The recluse describes what sounds like an 'out of body experience': 'I saw my body with the eyes of the soul lying on the floor of my cell, pale and bloodless, like dry, withered grass.'<sup>64</sup>

aequa cum capite devotione etiam caudam hostiae offerre satergit, testimonium ei perhibemus quia dignos faciet paenitentiae fructus': Ep. 454, in *SBO*, VIII, 429.

<sup>59</sup> Ep. 107, in *SBO*, VII, 267–76.

<sup>60</sup> See Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, pp.158–60; *Scivias*, bk I, vis. 2, pp. 13–38.

<sup>61</sup> 'De puella reclusa, quae Deum et angelos esse dubitans, de corpore egressa, per spiritum vidit angelos scilicet et animas, sicque ad corpus regressa est': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 39 (I, 206).

<sup>62</sup> 'Mox illa coepit variis cogitationibus fluctuare, in fide nutare, de perseverantia desperare. Invasit eam et defectus cordis, tabitudo corporis, torpor in oratione, dolor de reclusionem': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 39 (I, 207).

<sup>63</sup> 'Quis scit, si Deus sit, si sint cum illo angeli, animae, vel regnum coelorum': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 39 (I, 207).

<sup>64</sup> 'Corpus autem meum vidi oculis animae in pavimento cellulae meae ita exsanguie iacere et pallidum, sicut herbam sine succo et arefactam': Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 39 (I, 208).



She is shown enough — the souls in spherical form like the moon, for instance — to dispel her doubts.

Another case, with a less reassuring ending, is described in Chapter 40 of the same book. The heading reads: ‘Of a nun, who in her doubt and despair, threw herself into the Moselle’.<sup>65</sup> This woman, ‘of advanced age and of great reputed sanctity [...] began to doubt entirely all those things which she had believed since infancy and which it was her duty to believe’.<sup>66</sup> However, she is also said to believe that she was ‘reprobate, that is one appointed to eternal doom’,<sup>67</sup> which seems to indicate an acceptance of at least some of the articles of faith and some sort of religious worldview. The threat of the prior that if she persisted in this way of thinking he would be obliged to bury her in unhallowed ground, tipped her over, as it were, and she tried to drown herself in the Moselle. Rescued by a passerby, she was returned to her monastery where they ‘watched over her with greater care than before’.<sup>68</sup> Caesarius’s comment that since ‘God is very merciful and tries his Elect in many ways, he who so mercifully saved her from the river, having regard to her former good works, will not suffer her to perish in the end’<sup>69</sup> suggests that she did not immediately regain her previous believing state of mind.

### *Radical Doubts: Otloh*

Otloh von St Emmeram was probably born into a noble family in Freising, Bavaria, c. 1010. Destined for a career among the secular clergy, he was educated in liberal arts at the school of the Monastery of Tegernsee, where he also proved to be adept as a copyist. By 1024 he was exercising his skills at the Monastery of Hersfeld and also worked in this capacity for Bishop Meginhard von Würzburg

<sup>65</sup> ‘De sanctimoniali, quae in fide dubitans et desperans, in Mosellam se praecipitavit’: Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 40 (I, 209).

<sup>66</sup> ‘[F]emina proveciae aetatis, et magnae ut putabatur sanctitatis [...] de his quae ab infantia credit et credere debuit, omnino dubitare coepit, nec ab aliquo induci potuit, ut divinis communicaret sacramentis’: Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 40 (I, 209).

<sup>67</sup> ‘Ego sum de reprobis, de illis scilicet, qui damnandi sunt’: Caesarius von Heisterbach *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 40 (I, 209).

<sup>68</sup> ‘Tunc ad monasterium illam reducentes, diligentiores ei custodiam adhibuerunt’: Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 40 (I, 209).

<sup>69</sup> ‘Spero tamen quod Deus, qui multum est misericors, qui multis modis electos suos tentat, qui tam misericorditer de flumine illam liberavit, pristinos eius labores attendens, finaliter perire non sinet’: Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus*, bk IV, chap. 40 (I, 210).

(1019–34). By 1032 he had moved to the Benedictine house of St Emmeram, though not as a monk. After a series of tribulations, mental and physical, he decided to be professed at St Emmeram, although he subsequently managed to visit for a greater or lesser time various other monasteries in the region.

The *Liber de temptatione cuiusdam monachi* (c. 1068) has long been taken as the most extreme account of personal religious doubt to survive from the Middle Ages.<sup>70</sup> In it, Otloh describes the history of the ‘temptations’ he endured at the hands of the Devil. These comprise not only the usual sexual trials but doubts about the interpretation and authenticity of the Bible and ultimately (according to the received view) doubt concerning ‘the existence of God himself’. As translated by Colin Morris, Otloh explains:

When I was troubled by the other temptations indeed, there would be some lucid intervals and some hope of escape, but in these I was deprived for hours on end of any awareness of solace. In the others I was a good deal strengthened by the proofs of Holy Scripture, and fought against the assailing darts of death with the weapons of faith and hope; but on this occasion I was altogether enveloped by complete doubt and darkness of mind, and I thoroughly doubted if there were any truth or profit in the Bible or if Almighty God existed.<sup>71</sup>

Morris goes on to claim that ‘This experience underlay his desperate appeal for enlightenment: “Oh, if you indeed exist, Omnipotent, and if you are everywhere present, as I have often read in many books, now I pray you show your presence and your power, snatching me quickly from the perils about me; for I can no longer bear such great trials.”’<sup>72</sup>

But is this really what Otloh was saying? It seems that Otloh may have been uncertain even about what he was doubting. The passages quoted above can be

<sup>70</sup> See Misch, *Autobiographie*; Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual: 1050–1200* (New York: Harper, 1972), especially pp. 79–86; Hannah Williams, ‘Confronting the Temptations of the Text: Otloh of St Emmeram, *Lectio Divina*, and the Ascetic Life in Eleventh-Century Germany’ (unpublished master’s thesis, Monash University, Australia, 2002). While Otloh’s *De temptatione* starts off in the third person, the bulk of it adopts the first person.

<sup>71</sup> Morris, *Discovery*, p. 82; ‘in ista autem omni dubitatione et mentis cecitate circumseptus, si vel ulla in scripturis sacris veritas sit ac profectus, vel si deus omnipotens constet prorsus dubitavi’: *Liber de temptatione cuiusdam monachi*, ed and trans. by Sabine Gäbe, *Lateinische Sprache und Literature des Mittelalters*, 29 (Bern: Lang, 1999), p. 256.

<sup>72</sup> This depends on the punctuation in PL, CXLVI; compare Gäbe’s edition, p. 260: ‘O si quis es omnipotens/, et si sis undique praesens/, sicut et in libris legi sepiissime multis/, iam precor, ostende, quis sis/, et quid quoque possis/, eripiens citius me a periculis imminentibus. Nam sufferre magis nequeo *discrimina tanta*.’

read as making a less radical claim.<sup>73</sup> Thus the first could conclude with the doubt ‘whether God himself were omnipotent’, while the prayer, disregarding the (mis)leading punctuation of Migne, is better translated as ‘O, if you are someone who is omnipotent and omnipresent’.<sup>74</sup> Since Otloh examines and describes his doubts at some length, both in terms of the devilish suggestions (‘it was as if I could hear words being whispered in my ear by someone with his mouth close by’)<sup>75</sup> and from the countervailing point of view in what he takes to be the words of God,<sup>76</sup> we need to look more broadly at the account than the passages usually singled out for comment. It should also be noted that the description and overcoming of this most radical doubt (whatever it was) is only a small proportion of the work. Much more space is given to God’s explanation for, and examples of, his other forms of temptation, especially those of a sexual nature.

In Otloh’s account the temptations are described in roughly the order of their occurrence throughout his life, although he claims to be omitting some of the less interesting ones and also that he has also forgotten some of his temptations. His first important doubt occurred when the Devil suggested to him that his original entry into the monastic life was wrong because it was undertaken rashly and without counsel. Yet, the solution does not seem to be to return to the world.<sup>77</sup> This leads to some wider questions about how to live the good life. From here the Devil starts to induce despair in Otloh by suggesting that that he is not among the elect and, in fact, ‘not everyone is capable of good’.<sup>78</sup> He then attempts to get him to ‘blaspheme against divine justice’, since God does not seem to be supporting

<sup>73</sup> Michael Goodich appears to have interpreted Otloh’s situation in this way in the extract he includes in his collection *Other Middle Ages: Witnesses at the Margins of Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), where he writes, ‘the Devil insinuated himself into the believer’s mind, raising doubts about the true faith’ (p. 150).

<sup>74</sup> Goodich, *Other Middle Ages*, p. 164. ‘Who are you, Omnipotent One [...]?’ seems not only an odd translation, but an illogical form of address.

<sup>75</sup> ‘[I]nterimque quasi cuiusdam mecum colloquentis, et ore etiam apposito verba meis auribus susurrando inmittentis audirem’: Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 256.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Cumque huiusmodi inspiratione et instinctu circumventus ecclesiam intrassem, et ad orationis studium me suppliciter inclinassem vel prostravissem, deus scit, quod non mentior, videbatur mihi, quod aliquis etiam me deposceret eodem studio orandi dicens’: Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, pp. 262, 264.

<sup>77</sup> Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 248. The Devil’s approach is described as being particularly seductive in that he appears to sympathize with Otloh’s situation. Yet his advice, which often seems to be contradictory, leads Otloh into deeper confusion.

<sup>78</sup> ‘[Q]uod non omnis bona possit’: Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 250.

him in his trials. By selective quotation from the Scriptures he suggests that if all who sin will die, no one will be saved, thus apparently proving that God's mercy and justice are capricious.<sup>79</sup> Although such thoughts lead to various physical symptoms, including sleep disturbances, Otloh is still supported at times by the 'shield of faith and hope' he finds in Holy Scripture. So when this fails he begins to doubt both the truth and usefulness of the Scriptures and (in some sense) God. Henceforth he is assailed by further devilish whispers. The Devil argues that many do not observe the teachings of the Scriptures and suggests that both the sacred texts and creation itself are 'without reason and without a guide (or director)'.<sup>80</sup> Otloh tries to counter this argument with one from the remarkable congruence of the Scriptures but is still worried that their human authors may not have lived pure lives; he recognizes further problems of interpretation and concludes that if God existed (or alternatively were omnipotent) these would not occur.<sup>81</sup> Since Otloh thinks this sort of doubt 'unheard of' he conceals it from his fellow monks.<sup>82</sup> Yet he is still able to make a conditional appeal to God for aid and is immediately rewarded by the lifting of his doubts. He is further rewarded by an increase in understanding which he cannot hide and which he also uses as the occasion for producing his book of *Temptations*. As he puts it:

Immediately, by the grace of God, not only was the abovementioned cloud of doubt entirely removed, but such a great light of knowledge flashed in my heart that never afterwards would I suffer such darkness of deadly doubt, and the things which before I understood less well, I began to grasp. The grace of this understanding was increased in me throughout this time, so that I could not easily conceal it.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>79</sup> '[C]onatus est per alia sue fraudis argumenta ad iusticiae divine blasphemiam me deflectere non deterendo et improporando, sed quasi condolendo et compatiendo afflictione mee': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 250.

<sup>80</sup> '[...] quia et scripturarum testificatio et totius creature imaginatio absque ratione constat et sine rectore? Numquid experimento non cognoscis, quia aliud librorum relatio divinorum, et aliud vita moresque probantur esse hominum?': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 256. This argument can only be properly understood in the context of Otloh's particular ideas about truth in writing depending on the moral worth of the writer. On this see Williams, 'Confronting the Temptations of the Text', especially chap. 2.

<sup>81</sup> 'Alioquin si aliqua persona vel virtus dei omnipotentis esset, nequaquam tanta confusio atque: diversitas in rebus cunctis appareret': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 258.

<sup>82</sup> '[P]ropter inauditam ipsius impugnationis qualitatem ulli fratrum aperte indicare vereretur, nullum enim talia posse credere vel audire arbitrabar': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, pp. 258, 260.

<sup>83</sup> 'Nulla dehinc mora, et ablata est per dei gratiam non solum omnis illa dubitationis supradicte nebula, sed etiam scientie lux tanta in code meo emicuit, ut et numquam postmodum

So far what Otloh wrote could be taken to indicate either comprehensive doubt (of the very existence of God) or partial doubt (doubt about God's omnipotence, omniscience, etc.). It should also be remembered that the word *doubt* itself can be taken in a stronger or a weaker sense as meaning 'uncertainty about' something right along the scale towards its denial. The way in which his prayer is answered may help to decide the nature (and strength) of Otloh's doubts. Here we find a long piece by God about his justice and mercy and the benefits of temptation as a form of testing. The emphasis is on the justice of God's actions with many examples from Old and New Testaments from which he concludes: 'And so these same basic teachings and consolations are found in all the books of Holy Scripture, just as Paul the Apostle testifies, saying: *All Scripture inspired from Heaven is useful for teaching* (2 Tim. 3. 16).'<sup>84</sup>

There is also a fallback position where God says, if you distrust such teachings because they were 'said out of the shadow of the Law, or simply by men' you should at least trust what Jesus Christ says concerning sinners and salvation, the bottom line being that nothing is impossible with God.<sup>85</sup>

There is more on the usefulness of temptation in that it leads to self-knowledge, particularly of one's own frailty, and hence allows us to sympathize with others. After these general commendations of temptation God turns again

tales dubitationis mortifere tenebras sustinerem, et ea, que minus antea cognovi, intellegere cepissem. Cuius etiam intelligentie gratia in tantum per idem tempus mihi augebatur, ut non eam facile possem occultare': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 260.

<sup>84</sup> 'Eadem itaque rudimenta ac solacia in omnibus sacre scripture libris reperiuntur, sicut et apostolus Paulus testatur dicens: *Omnis scriptura divinitus inspirata, utilis est ad docendum*': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 274.

<sup>85</sup> 'Sed si de omnibus documentis, que iam ex scripturis sanctis prolata sunt, aliquid diffide res, vel quia ex legis umbra/, seu quia ex puris hominibus sunt dicta/, saltim ea, que dicta sunt a domino Ihesu Christo, qui deus et homo est, firmiter credere debuisses': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 274; see also 'Hostis namque tanti insidias nullatenus vales evadere, nisi firmiter credas *quia nihil impossibile est apud deum*/, et quoniam *salvat omnes sperantes in eum*' (p. 278); and 'Quid adhuc dubitas de ineffabili dei clementia, et de praevidenda diabolice fraudis astutia? Hostis namque tanti insidias nullatenus vales evadere, nisi firmiter credas, *quia nihil impossibile est apud deum* [Luke 1. 37] et quoniam *salvat omnes sperantes in eum*' [Ps. 36. 40.]' (p. 278). The standard argument that *all* of the Bible was divinely inspired and just needed to be correctly interpreted does not seem to have occurred to Otloh or indeed God. It is hard to believe that Otloh might not have been given this answer had he confided in his fellow monks; but we get the impression that Otloh always saw himself as a person apart and consequently something of an autodidact. We are told on several occasions, both by Otloh himself and by God, how remarkable he was for his facility in reading, writing, singing, etc.

to the particular temptations suffered by Otloh, 'the certain cleric' described at the beginning of the book.

On the matter of counsel God distinguishes good from bad, particularly with regard to their ends. He concludes that it was not wrong to have become a monk without counsel because the end is good. From here he addresses Otloh's spiritual doubts, some of which seem once more to refer to doubts about 'will and power'. The culmination of this is a passage notable for its ambiguous syntax. The best we can say is that it may mirror the uncertainty of Otloh's own doubts. He seems to be teetering on the verge of denying the existence of God, but even the mention of the archetypal doubter of Psalm 14 is conditional: 'Draw back, therefore, draw back, wretch, from this madness, because you are beset by diabolical delusions as has repeatedly been made clear to you. Watch out, O captive, that you are not the one about whom the psalmist says: *The fool says in his heart there is no God*.'<sup>86</sup>

In the last analysis it seems impossible to say just how far Otloh's doubting went. Even God's final word on the matter suggests that Otloh's doubting led him to be deprived of 'most certain knowledge of God's substance', which is not necessarily the same as his existence.<sup>87</sup> It seems then, for all his claim to be exceptional, that Otloh draws back from what he sees as the ultimate doubt (or indeed, the ultimate denial).<sup>88</sup>

But this is not the end of the matter; the second half of the work is devoted to various exemplary temptations, particularly of a sexual nature, since it seems that these remain with Otloh after the spiritual doubts have been dealt with. He

<sup>86</sup> 'Verum tamen praescio, quanta infirmitate et ambiguitate inter novas temptationis molestias dissolvamur, arbitratus scilicet me ipsum deum omnipotentem omnino non esse, et hec omnia, quae de me percepisti, apud te quasi somnia videri. Recede ergo, recede, miser, ab hac dementia, quia sicut sepius tibi patefactum est, delusione circumvallaris diabolica. Adtende, o captive, ne tu sis ille, de quo dicit psalmista: *Dixit insipiens in corde suo non est deus*': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, pp. 286, 288.

<sup>87</sup> '[A]d extremum vero, ut sicut tu quoque modo delusus privaris, de certissima substantiae mee priventur agnitione': Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 288. It is clear that at least part of Otloh's doubts were about God's nature and powers. We might compare here Baldwin of Forde's *De commendatione fidei*, chap. 11, p. 356: 'Someone who doubts, dwells a great deal on the power of God or on His will' (Multum autem refert de potentia Dei quis dubitet, an de eius uoluntate).

<sup>88</sup> It might be noted that Hildegard, in a letter to Abbot Adalard of Cologne, seems to take quite matter-of-factly the idea that some might deny existence of God. See *Epistolarium*, Ep. 155r, pp. 345–48. So perhaps Otloh was mistaken in thinking that he was exceptional even in the extent of his doubt.

concludes with an account of his entire oeuvre, both in copying and composition and an extended and a shorter prayer.<sup>89</sup>

Otloh's experience of doubt was the more agonizing in that he felt the usual sources of advice and counsel were closed to him. His account of the to-ing and fro-ing of argument between himself and the Devil is one of the finest illustrations we have of the doubting mind as it veers from one pole to the other. His agony was compounded when he was not able to find help in the Scriptures, since doubt about them was part of the problem. He felt he could not turn to his fellow monks, or indeed, his superiors, because he was so appalled by what he took to be the uniqueness of his predicament. He also suggests that such doubts affected his powers of reasoning and so this was not a way out either. He is brought back to the faith by what seems to be an almost instinctive appeal to God for help. This is immediately answered, not by any miraculous manifestation, but by divinely inspired understanding of what had happened to him, the burden of which he sets out in the rest of the book for the instruction of others who might experience similar doubts.<sup>90</sup>

### *Radical Doubts: Herbert of Bosham*

Herbert was born in Bosham, Sussex, c. 1120, around fifty years after the death of Otloh. He attended the schools at Paris, probably around 1150, and was a devoted pupil of Peter Lombard, who died in 1159. He also had connections with the Abbey of St Victor, studying under Hugh of St Victor, and possibly also Andrew of St Victor, an Old Testament scholar and a distinguished (or according to some), a dangerous Hebraist.<sup>91</sup> He appears to have been in royal service by 1157, since he was sent by Henry II on a diplomatic mission to Germany concerning the non-return of the arm of St James in September of that year.<sup>92</sup> He moved to the household of Thomas Becket when he became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162

<sup>89</sup> Neither prayer has any explicit mention of being preserved from doubt, although faith, hope, and charity are requested.

<sup>90</sup> The failure of the work to reach a wide audience is indicated by the fact that it survives in a single manuscript.

<sup>91</sup> He was accused of Judaizing by his fellow Victorine, Richard, in *De Emmanuele*. See *Andreae de Sancto Victore Opera II*, ed. by Franciscus A. van Liere, CCCM, 53 A (1966), pp. xxvii–iii.

<sup>92</sup> See Karl Leyser, 'Frederick Barbarossa, Henry II and the Hand of St James', *English Historical Review*, 90 (1975), 481–506.



and remained faithful to him to the end. He numbers himself among Becket's *eruditi* and was closely concerned with many aspects of his life, writing letters for him, instructing him in spiritual matters, and serving as his emissary, although he was often less than diplomatic in his behaviour. His life was probably saved by Becket's sending him away on an embassy to the King Louis VII of France on 26 December 1170. As Smalley remarks, 'Herbert regretted afterwards that he had not stayed with his master, while admitting frankly that perhaps it had been as well. He might have turned coward and hidden himself.'<sup>93</sup> Yet this seems unnecessarily self-deprecating. From all we can learn of his life he was both intellectually and personally courageous, strong-willed, and prepared to take up unpopular positions.

His early literary output includes letters for Becket (and on his own behalf). One of the latter is to the Abbot of Vézelay concerning the treatment of the heretics mentioned in Chapter 2, above. Herbert advised what was to become the standard procedure, handing over the convicted heretics to the secular arm for punishment though the Abbot appears not to have followed his advice.<sup>94</sup> While in exile 'between the monks and rocks' at Pontigny he undertook what has been described as a 'critical edition' of Peter Lombard's commentary on the Psalms at a time when the Lombard had fallen from favour.

After Becket's murder Herbert remained overseas, refusing to take the oath of loyalty demanded as a condition of ending his exile, apparently living on the generosity of various literary patrons. This time included a period of further study in Paris from around 1174. It is not clear when he arrived back in England, though he had an unsatisfactory visit to Canterbury in 1184. He was more warmly received in 1187 when he urged the monks to stand up for their rights against Archbishop Baldwin. He finally got a position with Master William Longchamp (perhaps before 1189) but we soon find him withdrawn to the Monastery of Ourscamp in the diocese of Arras, writing his commentary on the *Hebraica*.<sup>95</sup> He is thought to have died sometime around 1194 and is unreliably held to have been

<sup>93</sup> Beryl Smalley, *The Becket Conflict and the Schools* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), p. 81 (as in fact, did John of Salisbury).

<sup>94</sup> PL, CXC, cols 1462–63.

<sup>95</sup> This remarkable work, which was first identified only fifty years ago and is still unedited, is unique in concentrating exclusively on the literal or historical meaning of the text. Deborah Goodwin shows how his use of the commentary of Rashi allowed him to reach 'a more inclusive vision of the end of days than earlier Christians had contemplated'. See her *Take Hold of the Robe of the Jew: Herbert of Bosham's Christian Hebraism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), p. 230.



buried in the Church of Bosham in Sussex. Apart from his scholarly works the later part of his life was devoted to advancing the cause of Thomas's canonization and after that the cause of what he terms 'his living relics', among whom Herbert numbers himself. It is in one of these works that his doubt about the faith unexpectedly surfaces.

The wider context for raising the doubt is an explanation of why Thomas Becket was accustomed to hurry through the Mass. Herbert puts this down to the fact that the Devil, or wicked angels (*angelos malos*) through malice and envy were always most ready to send their wicked darts — pernicious and idle thoughts — into those present, including, it would seem, the celebrant.<sup>96</sup> Here Herbert touches on what might be described as a Eucharistic doubt, although it is of a quite unusual kind. The question here is not of the real presence or how the bread and wine changes into the body and blood of Christ but rather whether the sacrament is justified at all, in fact, whether Jesus was indeed the Messiah. He writes first of all as if this were a mere hypothetical:

What therefore if the Church were to believe that the Lord had been made flesh and yet he had not yet been? Indeed many hold, and perhaps not irrationally, that if the Church were to believe that, the Church would not be very damnable on account of that belief, so long as faith in the rest of the articles of belief and especially in the unitary and triune God were unbroken; just as, on the other hand, Cornelius was minimally damnable to whom the angel said 'thy prayer is heard and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God' even before he believed Christ (who was already incarnate) to be incarnate.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>96</sup> See Herbert of Bosham, *Vita S. Thomae*, bk 3, chap. 13, in *Materials*, III, 210–11: 'Comedebat itaque festinanter propter immissiones per angelos malos, perniciosum scilicet vanarum cogitationum superventum.' Cf. Caesarius's account of the doubting priest on p. 71, above. The more immediate context remains uncertain. An unscrupulous librarian had excised a number (possibly as much as a quarter) of the leaves from the only surviving full version of the text, Arras, Bibliothèque de la Ville MS 649. A number of these were recovered by Sir Thomas Phillipps in 1828 but subsequently lost. See Theodore Craib, 'The Arras MS. of Herbert of Bosham', *English Historical Review*, 35 (1920), 218–24. Some of the lost leaves have now found their way into private collections. However even when all the surviving material is put together there still seems to be something missing (represented by the row of asterisks in *Materials*, III, 212).

<sup>97</sup> 'Quid igitur si ecclesia crederet Dominum sic incarnatum, et tamen necdum incarnatus fuisset? Sentiunt certe plerique, et non irrationabiliter forte, quod si ecclesia crederet sic, ecclesiam ob fidem hanc damnabilem minime. Ita tamen si in reliquis fidei articulis et praesertim in unum et trinum Deum fides fuisset integra; quemadmodum e diverso et Cornelius mox minime damnabilis fuit, etsi non crederet Christum incarnatum; qui tamen antequam id crederet incarnatus jam erat. Cui etiam, antequam Christum jam incarnatum crederet incarnatum, dictum est illud per angelum "Orationes tuae et elemosynae tuae ascenderunt in memoriam in conspectu

He soon dismisses this line of thought about the timing of the Incarnation, comforting himself with the idea that even if, contrary to the certain faith of the Catholic Church, 'there were not a sacramental conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ' its usage in the Mass would be a more pleasing sacrifice to God than the bloody offerings of the Synagogue.<sup>98</sup> He allows himself to dwell on the 'hard and inhuman daily slaughter of beasts both in the morning and the evening [...] so many sheep, so many cattle, so many bulls, so many he-goats, so many lambs, so many calves, so many wethers [...] where neither the simplicity of the dove nor the chastity of the turtle(dove) was spared'. To this he contrasts the evangelical 'sacrifice of praise, not of mangled flesh, of drawn entrails, of stinking innards, not of dung or smoke or ordure'.<sup>99</sup> However, he concludes, it is just because the Christian sacrifice is so much more acceptable to the Lord that this is the time when the exterminating angel sends his fiercest darts.<sup>100</sup>

While he attributes these doubts to the destabilizing efforts of the Devil, it is probably that Herbert's Old Testament studies were partly to blame. He was familiar with the usual (and some of the less usual) Jewish interpretations of the messianic prophecies of the Bible. His countervailing descriptions of Jewish rites also draw on knowledge of Jewish historical practices.<sup>101</sup> But, as in Otloh's case, further reading of the Bible was not the answer; Herbert required something

Dei": Herbert of Bosham, *Vita S. Thomae*, bk 3, chap. 13, in *Materials*, III, 213–14. The reference is to Acts 10.

<sup>98</sup> '[...] quod etiam etsi praefata illa sicut fide certa tota credit catholica, panis et vini in corpus Christi et sanguinem non fieret sacramentalis conversio, tamen quod ad se miro modo esset, sicut munda et clara, simplex, sincera, et devota in puro pane et vino secundum ordinem Melchisidech matris nostrae catholicae oblatio haec': *Materials*, III, 214.

<sup>99</sup> '[...] dura quaedam et inhumana bestiarum et in mane et in vespere quotidiana occisio. Ubi quotidie oves tot, tot boves, tot tauri, tot hirci, tot agni, tot vituli, tot verveculi mactabantur. A qua etiam mactatione nec simplicitas columbam nec castitas turturem tuebatur': *Materials*, III, 214. Such vehemence rather brings into question the measure of his sympathy with contemporary Jews that Goodwin sees in his work on the Psalms, though she does note that 'there were limits to his tolerance (to use an anachronistic term), as there necessarily were for any sincere Christian who wanted to avoid the accusation of heresy or the label of "judaizer"' (pp. 230–31). Cf. *Materials*, III, 214–15: 'sacrificium laudis, non dilaniatarum carnium, non erutorum viscerum, non foetentium intestinorum, non fimi, non fumi, non stercoris.'

<sup>100</sup> '[Q]uo plus Domino acceptum, eo exterminator angelus hujus ora sacrificii, sicut et magis subdolas, et acriores et crebriores facit immisiones': *Materials*, III, 215.

<sup>101</sup> See further Goodwin, *Take Hold*. She suggests that for Herbert 'the messiahship of Christ, the coming of the kingdom of God, was an ongoing process, working itself out in time not only in relation to Christians but also to Jews' (p. 231).

more. Having once expressed these troubling thoughts, he was keen to dispel any notion of his continuing heterodoxy. He writes:

However, when I began to think, as if doubtingly about this, the following night I was shown the host in a chalice. It seemed to be constantly moving back and forth and very rapidly whizzing round in a circle. And when next morning I secretly reported this to my Lord archbishop, and how I had been thinking as if doubtfully, he immediately replied that the movement in the chalice indicated the fluctuation which was going on in my mind.<sup>102</sup>

This diagnosis hardly seems miraculous, partly because Herbert had already indicated that he had doubts and partly because the movement of the host, as described by Herbert, externalizes so graphically the movement of the doubting mind. Herbert concludes, with more complacency than we might think warranted, 'Henceforth I stand more firmly and ever more devoutly in the faith of that sacrament through the grace of God.' Then, like Otloh, he returns to a discussion of other devilish distractions.<sup>103</sup>

However, Beryl Smalley suggests that another extended passage in the *Liber Melorum* — a very lengthy song of praise to Thomas — which reads like a minisumma may mean that 'perhaps he doubted God's very existence and felt the need to reassure himself'.<sup>104</sup> But recent work on the *Liber Melorum* argues that this section, far from being a kind of afterthought, as suggested by Smalley, is a central theme deeply embedded in the structure of that very complex work.<sup>105</sup> It is, in fact, Herbert's attempt to grapple with some of the theological questions of the day and need not suggest that he felt any more doubt than, say, Anselm did when he constructed his ontological argument.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> 'De quo tamen cum ego aliquando quasi haesitans cogitare coepissem, nocte sequenti visa est mei hostia hac et illac in calice, quasi in motu continuo et citissimo circumagere se et circumferre. Quod cum in crastino domino meo archipraesuli secreto retulissem, et qualiter quasi haesitans praecogitaveram, respondit mox archipraesul hostiae motum in calice fluctuationem meam indicare quae praecoepit in mente': *Materials*, III, 215.

<sup>103</sup> 'Unde et in hujus sacramenti fide per Dei gratiam semper firmior sto et deinceps devotior. Sed revertamur ad praetactas malas mali angeli immissiones': *Materials*, III, 215.

<sup>104</sup> Smalley, *Becket Conflict*, p. 80 n. 84. Smalley intended to edit and comment on this section of the *Liber melorum* (PL, CXC, cols 1355–62) but unfortunately appears never to have done so.

<sup>105</sup> See Jessica Weiss, *Herbert of Bosham's 'Liber Melorum': Literature and Sacred Studies in the Twelfth Century* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 2003; UMI 3091772), especially chap. 6.

<sup>106</sup> On the question of Anselm's possible doubt see Anna Sapir Abulafia, 'St Anselm and Those Outside the Church', in *Faith and Unity: Christian Political Experience*, ed. by D. Loades and K. Walsh, *Studies in Church History, Subsidia* 6 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), pp. 11–37 (p. 27 n. 71).

### *Doubts of the Unlettered*

I shall conclude this chapter with some doubts of the unlettered, as reported by Peter of Cornwall, in his *Liber revelationum*. The prologue to his comprehensive collection of visions relating to the afterlife begins as follows:

Although nearly all nations of men, having discarded idols, believe there is one God, yet there are some who think there is no God and that the world was always as it is now and judge that it is ruled by chance rather than the providence of God. And there are many who, thinking only of the things that they see, do not believe either good or bad angels exist, nor that the soul of man lives on after the body nor that other spiritual and invisible things exist.<sup>107</sup>

It is not clear how much we should make of what seems like a statement of widespread religious scepticism. A similar claim occurs in Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* (c. 593) from which Peter of Cornwall takes many of his stories.<sup>108</sup> It seems more likely that the extracts are intended to instruct the uncertain in various aspects of theological thought such as penance, which were undergoing development at the time, rather than to form a defence against comprehensive rejection of the Christian faith.<sup>109</sup> Or perhaps he simply wanted an excuse to collect some good stories.<sup>110</sup> Many of these are the familiar stock-in-trade of otherworld visions — St Patrick's Purgatory, the Vision of Drichthelm — while others are part of his own family history. One such is the vision of Ailsí, Peter's grandfather.

<sup>107</sup> 'Licet fere omnes hominum nationes abiectis ydolis unum iam esse deum credant tamen quia nonnulli sunt qui deum non esse putantes mundum semper fuisse sicut nunc est et casu potius quam prouidentia dei regi estimant multique sint qui solum ea que uident pensantes nec bonos angelos siue malos esse nec animam hominis post mortem corporis uiuere nec alia spiritualia et inuisibilia esse credant': *Liber revelationum*, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>108</sup> See Book 3, Chapter 38, where Peter, Gregory's interlocutor in the *Dialogues*, asks, 'Quam multos intra sanctae ecclesiae gremium constitutos de uita animae post mortem carnis perpendo dubitare. Quaeso ut debeas, uel quae ex ratione suppetunt, uel si qua animarum exempla animo occurrunt, pro multorum aedificatione dicere, ut hii qui suspicantur discant cum carne animam non finiri': Grégoire Le Grand, *Dialogues*, ed. by Adalbert de Vogüé and others, SCH 250, 260, 265, 3 vols (Paris: Cerf, 1978–80), II, 432.

<sup>109</sup> Compare here Hugh of Fouilloi's *De claustro animo*, in PL, CLXXVI, col. 1179: 'Quoniam quidem simpliciores fratres de animabus ante resurrectionem quibus in locis sint dubitant, ideo volumus ut de eis divinae scripturae uerbis certiores fiant.'

<sup>110</sup> A couple of the best have been included in G. G. Coulton's *Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1918), pp. 218–26.

This tale offers an interesting insight into the state of belief among the laity in ‘the time of Henry I’ (1100–35), albeit at some removes, since Peter of Cornwall was not born before about 1140. Ailsa told his vision to his son Jordanus, who relayed the tale to his own son Peter (the author) when he was a lad.<sup>111</sup> Ailsa is described as a devout Christian but unsure about ‘the state of the blessed after death’.<sup>112</sup> There are a couple of intriguing aspects to this tale, one being the fact that the otherworldly conductor in the dream vision, Ailsa’s son and Peter’s uncle, went by the name of ‘Paganus’, apparently because he had not been baptized until he was twelve years old.<sup>113</sup> Shortly after this auspicious event Paganus died, a fact which apparently cast the father into doubt.<sup>114</sup> Ailsa’s state of mind is portrayed using all the resources of the considerable lexicon of doubt available at the time — including his indecisive to-ing and fro-ing, fluctuating thoughts, and general anxiety.<sup>115</sup> Thus he is described in the *mise-en-scène* as dreaming that he had set out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with many others. Passing from a mountain into a dark valley he became separated from his companions. Then he came to a vast river.

Greatly troubled, he decided to go now here, now there along the bank of that stream, both back and forth, seeking if by any chance he could find a bridge by which he could cross over to the other side of the river. But because he could not see a way, or find a bridge, he stood there exhausted, despondent and almost despairing, quite unaware of what to do or where to turn. And looking here and there in his great anxiety he begged for help from God and St Stephen. Then he was found worthy to receive what he sought

<sup>111</sup> See *Liber revelationum*, fol. 26<sup>r</sup>. On the difficulties involved in assessing the extent of lay knowledge see Emma Mason, ‘The Role of the English Parishioner’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (1976), 17–29. Also C. S. Watkins, ‘Penance and Purgatory in the Anglo-Norman Realm: The Evidence of Visions and Ghost Stories’, *Past & Present*, 175 (2002), 3–34.

<sup>112</sup> ‘vir simplex ac rectus et timens deum et recedens a mala’; ‘cepit secum cogitare de futuri sancti statu’: *Liber revelationum*, fols 23<sup>r</sup>, 26<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Paganus vocabatur eo quod diu paganus fuit, videlicet duodecim annis ante baptismum’: *Liber revelationum*, fol. 26<sup>r</sup>. No explanation is given for this remarkable omission. Ailsa is represented as a ‘man of God’ particularly devoted the canons of St Stephen at Launceston and to St Stephen himself.

<sup>114</sup> Whether this means that none of his previous children had died or that he was he particularly attached to Paganus is not clear. Ailsa had four sons, as well as several daughters who are only mentioned in passing.

<sup>115</sup> ‘[N]ec aliquis alia eum inde certificare poterat nimis anxius remanebat. Et quanto minus de penis malorum et premiis bonorum noverat tanto magis talia scire sollicitus erat. Sed quia deus noluit dilectum diu in horum ignorantia dubiis cogitationibus fluctuare misit ei in visione nocturna filium suum praedictum Paganum qui eum omnia doceret’: *Liber revelationum*, fol. 26<sup>r</sup>. Cf. Flanagan, ‘Lexicographic and Syntactic Explorations’, pp. 228–32.

because of his great devotion. While his mind was wavering now here, now there, in doubt, behold his son Paganus was seen to stand before him'.<sup>116</sup>

The upshot was that Paganus carried him on his back across the stream, where he was shown some of the pains of purgatory and then the delights of paradise. After baulking at having to return to life on earth, the vision fades and he wakes up lamenting the (temporary as it turns out) loss of such felicity.<sup>117</sup> C. S. Watkins sees Peter's account of Ailsa's dream as an attempt to convey some of the newer teachings about penance and the more hopeful position of the laity in terms of enjoying the afterlife (as opposed, presumably, to the Anselmian view that few would be saved and most of them monks).<sup>118</sup> However, it should be remembered that Peter's vast compilation contains many different otherworld visions, drawn from different periods, and it might be asked whether these all convey such an optimistic message.<sup>119</sup> If Peter's aim is to give a new slant to an existing theological doctrine, his introduction should not be taken at face value to indicate the actual state of belief or unbelief among the common people, or indeed their more educated pastors.<sup>120</sup> On the other hand, presumably his readers did not think it

<sup>116</sup> '[A]d vallis ima ubi flumen magnum vidit, sed nec latitudinem eius nec longitudinem tum pro sua immensitate tum pro nebule densitate transcendere potuit. Nimum itaque anxius super ripam fluminis nunc hac nunc illac videlicet sursum et vrsus ambulare decrevit ut si forte pontem inveniret proditum ad alteram fluminis transiret. Sed quia nec viam vidit nec pontem invenit lassus et fere desperans et deficiens et omnino ignorans quid ageret quo se verteret substitit et huc illucque respiciens auxilium a deo et a sancto Stephano nimis anxius expostulavit unde et accipere meruit quod tota devotione petivit. Cum ergo animus eius dubie huc illucque fluctuaret ecce puer predictus videtur filius eius Paganus coram eo astitit': *Liber revelationum*, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>117</sup> '[E]t pater a sompno extussus se in domo sua nimis anxius inuenit quia tante amenitatis gaudia perdiderat': *Liber revelationum*, fol. 28<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>118</sup> Watkins, 'Sin, Penance and Purgatory', pp. 16–18.

<sup>119</sup> 'Rigorous earthly penitential activity finds no place. The consequences of sin are expunged after death in purgatorial places (which are the major subject of the vision). Most importantly Peter portrays a wide spectrum of society as ultimate "beneficiaries" of purgatorial fire. Having passed through it, souls arrive in a place of "refreshment" — earthly paradise — where Ailsa sees separate choirs of virgins, widows, husbands and wives, of prelates and bishops and also "choirs of all orders, grades, sexes and ages"' (Watkins, 'Penance and Purgatory', pp. 17–18).

<sup>120</sup> In his preface Peter seems to be addressing his peers when he says that he has collected the stories from numerous sources to present them in a more handy compendium. But this is also something of a topos for such compilations. He also says, more surprisingly: 'Quem librum si quis non minus oculis cordis quam corporis perlegere studuerit deum et angelos et animas hominum esse et post mortem corporis uiuere non dubitabit' (*Liber revelationum*, fol. 2<sup>r</sup>) Perhaps here he means that the canons will be able to convince others, rather than needing to be convinced themselves.

was beyond the bounds of possibility that some people should harbour such thoughts.

### *Conclusion*

The examples of spiritual doubt assembled in this chapter range from uncertainty about one's personal salvation, through doubts about various aspects of the faith (the meaning of certain passages in the Bible, the truth of the Bible itself, the nature of the sacrament, the state of the soul after death), to more radical uncertainty about whether Christ was the expected Messiah or (possibly) whether God exists at all. The idea that atheism was somehow unthinkable in the Middle Ages does not stand up in the light of such examples.<sup>121</sup> It was indeed thinkable because of the example of the Fool in Psalms 14. 1, and various passing references to people who do not believe this or that abound. Obviously written evidence left by doubters is harder to come by, given what was at stake, which is why Otloh and Herbert — whatever the exact extent of their doubts — are so interesting.

The methods for resolving such doubts once again run the gamut already explored, from counsel (of the wise or the spiritually adept) to direct appeals to God. Here straightforward soothsaying techniques are virtually absent for obvious reasons, and there is more direct recourse to God and the saints, although, as in the case of Otloh this is an act of desperation when all else fails. Herbert of Bosham, as befits an intellectual, does try to work through his doubts by reason, but even he is eventually released from uncertainty by a divinely inspired dream, interpreted by someone who can (retrospectively) be seen as a spiritual heavy-weight.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>121</sup> See Susan Reynolds, 'Social Mentalities and the Case of Medieval Scepticism', *TRHS*, ser. 6, 1 (1991), 26–27.

<sup>122</sup> At least this is how Herbert is at pains to portray Becket from the moment he becomes archbishop.





## DISCUSSIONS OF THE NATURE OF DOUBT

We saw in the last chapter how people in the twelfth century tried to deal with spiritual doubt, whether it concerned the meaning of the Scriptures, matters of doctrine such as the sacraments, doubts about their own worthiness to be saved, or occasionally such radical doubts as whether the Messiah proclaimed by Christianity had already come or the very existence of God. Yet when we come to examine discussions of doubt, rather than accounts of specific instances of doubt, we find very few explicit investigations of the nature of doubt in the twelfth century. Those that do appear are usually in the context of explaining belief or unbelief in matters of faith rather than in secular epistemological terms.

Twelfth-century discussions about, or perceptions of, the nature of doubt fall into two main categories: a) those taking what might be called a ‘psychological’ point of view; b) epistemological examinations via its relation to faith and the connection between faith and knowledge. But first, for a secular view, we shall see what the grammarians had to say on the subject.

*Doubt and Grammar*

Doubt is only touched on obliquely in the standard grammatical texts in use in the twelfth century. Thus Donatus (fl. AD 354) was concerned in his *Ars minor* with describing the principle parts of speech.<sup>1</sup> When he comes to adverbs, he classifies them by the manner in which they modify verbs. Here along with adverbs of place,

<sup>1</sup> For Donatus’s *Ars minor*, see <[http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0192/\\_P4.HTm](http://www.intratext.com/IXT/LAT0192/_P4.HTm)> [accessed July 2006].

quality, quantity, affirmation, and others we find ‘doubting’ adverbs such as *forsitan* (there would be a chance, perhaps), *fortasse* (perhaps, probably, possibly, also I ween, no doubt). In the section on adverbs in his *Ars grammatica*, Boniface (c. 672–754) has *fors*, *forsitan*, *fortassis*, *fortasse*, *fortansan* as adverbs of doubting. He also sets out the connection between the various adverbs deriving from *fors* (chance, luck, hazard) when he adds: ‘*Fors* also gives rise to adverbs of various forms: for we say, *forsitan*, *fortassis*, *forsan*, *forte*.’<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that following Donatus he had classed *forte* (by chance) under *eventus*, i.e. ‘how things happen’, but his comment here suggests how *forte* might subsequently have been incorporated into the list of doubting adverbs as we shall see was to be the case.<sup>3</sup>

In his *De grammatica*, Hugh of St Victor, echoing Donatus on the doubting adverbs, also mentions a further marker of doubt. In his section on *notitia*, which includes what we would think of as ordinary punctuation marks (and which seem to be employed mostly as a guide to reading aloud), he has a list of critical markers that he calls ‘nota sententiarum’, which are used to annotate larger units of text. Among the asterisk and the paragraph marker we find the obelisk/obelus which is placed near a suspect passage when it is uncertain whether it should be included or left out.<sup>4</sup> This may well be what John of Salisbury is referring to in *Metalogicon*, Book I, Chapter 20, when he writes that there are signs which can be used to indicate what is ‘clear, what obscure, what certain, what doubtful and much more’ in a piece of writing. He deplores the fact that such notations have largely fallen out of use.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> ‘*Fors quoque uariarum aduerbia figurarum facit; dicimus enim forsitan fortasse fortassis fors an forte*’: Boniface, *Ars grammatica* ed. by G.J. Gebauer and B. Lofstedt, CCSL, 133B (1980), p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> The problem for Christians was the connection of these words with the pagan idea of ‘fate’ or ‘chance’ which was in conflict with the Christian idea of divine omnipotence. In this connection compare Augustine’s *Retractationum libri ii*, ed. by Almut Mutzenbecher, CCSL, 57 (1984), bk I, chap. 1, pp. 7–8, although by the twelfth century the original etymological force seems almost to have disappeared and thus *forte* was used to mean ‘perhaps’, ‘possibly’. Smaragdus in the ninth century has a couple of variations on the usual list: ‘SUNT DUBITANDI, UT FORSITAN, FORTASSE, fors, fors an utrum’. The inclusion of *utrum* is interesting. For *eventus* he lists ‘FORTE, FORTUITU, subito, repente, inopinante, inseperate, inspecte’: Smaragdus, *Liber in partibus Donati*, ed. by Bengt. Löfstedt and others, CCCM, 68 (1986), *De adverbio*, p. 188.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Obelus superne adpunctus: hec apponitur in hiis de quibus dubitatur utrum tolli debeant uel relinquī’: Hugh of St Victor, *Opera propaedeutica*, ed. by Roger Baron, Notre Dame Publications in Mediaeval Studies, 20 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1966), p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Sunt et notae quae scripturarum distinguunt modos, ut deprehendatur quid in eis lucidum, quid obscurum, quid certum, quid dubium, et in hunc modum plurima. Pars haec tamen artis ex

### *Hervé de Bourg-Dieu and Putative Doubt*

Hervé, who died around 1150, spent all his adult life at the Benedictine monastery of Bourg-Dieu in the town now called Déols in Berry, France. His chief writings were biblical commentaries, including works on Genesis, Deuteronomy, Ruth, Tobit, Proverbs, Isaiah, the minor prophets, and the Pauline Epistles. He also wrote on the *Hierarchia caelestis* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and produced a reasoned criticism of some traditional liturgical readings in which he argues for 'truth' over 'custom' and calls for a very modern-sounding return 'ad fontes'.<sup>6</sup> His last work, something apparently considered suitable by his fellow monks for his declining years, was a commentary on the allegorical parody of a biblical feast which went under the name of *Cena Cypriani*.<sup>7</sup>

The relevant passages of analysis for our study occur in his commentary on the Pauline Epistles, notably I Corinthians 7. 39–40, concerning the remarriage of widows: 'The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord. But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgement: and I think also I have the Spirit of God.'<sup>8</sup> On the closing sentence Hervé notes, 'He adds at the end the apostolic authority "according to my judgement". Then, lest the authority of the Apostle seem too light as being that of a man, he adds "and I think also I have the Spirit of God"'. Hervé then explains the force of the verb *think* in this context. He writes:

Because the Apostle says 'I think' he seems to doubt (be uncertain), but he is not doubting, he is chiding. He is challenging those who make light of him, who did not think he was saying these things through the Spirit of God. For even concerning things they hold certain, men sometimes doubt in a chiding way, that is, they proffer a word of doubt, although they do not doubt in their hearts, just as someone who is angry might say to his servant: 'Do you defy me? Consider, perhaps, I am your master.' In the same way the

maxima parte in desuetudinem abiit': *Metalogicon*, ed by J. B. Hall and K. S. B. Keats-Rohan, CCCM, 98 (1991), bk I, chap. 20, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> For the text see G. Morin, 'Un critique en liturgie au XII siècle. Le traité inédit d'Hervé de Bourgdieu. *De correctione quarundam lectionum*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 24 (1907), 36–61.

<sup>7</sup> On this see Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966), chap. 2; André Wilmart, 'Le Prologue d'Hervé de Bourgdieu pour son Commentaire de la *Cena Cypriani*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 35 (1923), 255–63.

<sup>8</sup> 'Mulier alligata est legi quanto tempore vir ejus vivit. Quod si dormierit vir ejus, liberata est a lege. Qui autem vult nubat, tantum in domino beatior autem erit si sic permanserit secundum meum consilium. Puto autem quod et ego Spiritum Dei habeam': PL, CLXXXI, col. 889.

Saviour did not doubt, but chided, when he said to the Jews: 'If you believe Moses you will also perhaps believe me' [John 5]. He said 'perhaps' not doubtfully but chidingly.<sup>9</sup>

Hervé seems to have picked up the reference to this passage in Romans from St Augustine's Tractatus 37 from his *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*. He has also taken over almost word-for-word Augustine's explanation of *forsitan* in the original and applied it to *puto*.<sup>10</sup> While we may regret Hervé's lack of originality, the analysis does show that he was sensitive to the way in which context may change the meaning of words, or indeed larger linguistic units.<sup>11</sup>

We might note here that there is a second use of such doubting vocabulary where the intention may be something more akin to a modesty topos. Thus Jerome and other exegetes often used *forte/forsitan* in their exegesis in order to appear less dogmatic.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, they also commonly employ phrases like *haud dubium* (doubtless) where the supposition or explanation seems to have no greater probability of being true. We may compare this rather limited employment of doubt words with John of Salisbury's description of the Academicians who liberally salted their works with such terms.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> 'Continuo subjungit apostolicam auctoritatem, secundum meum consilium. Porro ne auctoritas Apostoli quasi hominis levior videretur, addidit; *Puto autem quod et ego Spiritum Dei habeam*. [...] Quod Apostolus dicit: *Puto*, dubitare videtur; sed ille increpat, non dubitat. Increpat contemptores suos, qui non putabant eum ista loqui per Spiritum Dei. Nam et homines de his rebus quas certas habent, aliquando increpitave dubitant, id est verbum dubitationis ponunt, cum corde non dubitent, velut si quis indignetur et dicat servo suo: Contemnīs me? Considera, forsitan dominus tuus sum. Sic et Salvator non dubitat, sed increpat, cum dicit Judaeis: "Si crederetis Moysi, crederetis forsitan et mihi." Non dubitave, sed increpitave dixit, forsitan': PL, CLXXXI, col. 889–90.

<sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that Augustine's reason for doubting that 'doubt' is in question here is that God, who knows everything, could not be said to doubt anything. So on the principle that if the literal meaning is absurd it has to be taken some other way, the double meaning of 'doubt' is revealed: 'ille qui omnia scit, quando dicit *forsitan*, non dubitat, sed increpat.' The principle is then extended to people who are very sure of their grounds, 'de his rebus quas certas habent': *Iohannis euangelium tractatus cxxiv*, ed. by Radbod Willems, CCSL, 36 (1954), Tr. 37, p. 333.

<sup>11</sup> Compare Hervé's work on the liturgy and Abelard's rules for textual criticism in the preface to the *Sic et Non*. It is also interesting to note that Hervé refers to the *tituli* of the Psalms as being essential for their understanding, a matter given close consideration by Herbert of Bosham.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Jerome, *Commentariorum in Esaiam libri I–XI*, ed. by Marcus Adriaen, CCSL, 73 (1963), bk III, chap. 7, p. 105; bk V, chap. 14, p. 170; bk V, chap. 18, p. 189, etc.

<sup>13</sup> 'In his itaque facile crediderim Academicos tanto modestius dubitasse quanto eos temeritatis praecipitium diligentius praecauisse repperio. Adeo quidem ut, cum apud scriptores in locis non passim dubiis uerba quodammodo ambigua, qualia sunt haec: si, forte, fortasse et

### *Psychology of Doubt*

Just as doubt words might mean different things in different contexts, the concept of doubt itself held an equivocal place in medieval psychology, or what passed for it. For instance, 'doubt' itself does not appear in any of the several lists of vices, or for that matter the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius (348–c. 410). The closest we get are the derivative and extreme forms of *blasphemia* or *desperatio*.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless doubt was often thought to be implicated in vices such as these, which appear to be related to credal attitudes. This is not surprising if we consider that doubt can be thought of as occupying a position on a continuum at one end of which might lurk despair (the theological conviction that one could not be saved) or blasphemy (generally regarded as a denial of God in some form or other). Moreover doubts about some beliefs might lead by association to doubts about others. We have already seen with Otloh how uncertainty of the truth of Scripture could lead to uncertainty about the omnipotence or benevolence of God which might, in turn, lead to denial of his very existence.

That doubt in a Christian context can be viewed more specifically as a lack of trust or faith in the promises or indeed the guarantees of God (or Christ or the Holy Spirit) accounts for such pronouncements as where Peter Lombard writes: 'Desperation is when someone completely distrusts the goodness of God, thinking his evil exceeds the greatness of divine goodness, like Cain who said: "My iniquity is too great for me to deserve forgiveness."' <sup>15</sup> Andrew of St Victor

forsitan, proferuntur, Achademico dicantur uti temperamento, eo quod temperatores alii Achademici fuerint, qui omnem ueriti sunt temerariae diffinitionis subire notam et praecipitium falsitatis': John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. by C. C. J. Webb, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), bk VII, chap. 2 (II, 99).

<sup>14</sup> In the *Psychomachia* Faith fights against Idolatry (or worship of the old gods). For an explanation of the diversity of listings of the various vices and virtues and their relation to lists of sins see Morton W. Bloomfield's still useful *The Seven Deadly Sins* ([East Lansing]: Michigan State University Press, 1952). Thus, 'the virtues and vices had origins independent of each other. This accounts for the great difficulty medieval writers faced when, in their efforts to give a rational meaning to the universe, they attempted to oppose the virtues and vices. Pride, avarice, lust, envy, gluttony, anger and sloth just cannot be perfectly balanced with fortitude, prudence, temperance, justice, faith, hope and charity without violent damage to the validity of the contrast' (p. 67). The classification of vices and virtues was another realm in which the twelfth century allowed more leeway than later times when both categories and lists had become more standardized. We find the odd reference to the 'sin of doubt' but more often it is something less dire, like the 'error of doubt'.

<sup>15</sup> 'Desperatio est, qua quis penitus diffidit de Dei bonitate, aestimans suam malitiam bonitatis divinae magnitudinem excedere, sicut Cain, qui dixit: *Maiores iniquitas mea, quam ut ueniam merear*': Lombard, *Sententiae*, bk II, dist. 43, chap. 1, p. 533.

puts the case even more forcefully. Referring to Cain, he writes: 'He says, in desperation, that his iniquity is greater than that which can merit forgiveness. This is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. For whoever despairs thinks God either less good or less powerful, such that he cannot do everything or begrudges the salvation of some.'<sup>16</sup>

In *Liber uitae meritorum* Hildegard devotes an entire section to the personification of *Desperatio*. She is pictured as a woman dressed entirely in clothing of dark and gloomy hue: 'Her head was covered, in womanly fashion, by a dusky veil and the rest of her body enveloped by dusky clothing, because her intention was fragile and infirm and she was surrounded with the darkness of doubt and desolation.'<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly, Hildegard has a medical or somatic take on desperation as well as a spiritual or psychological one. In God's relayed instructions about how to avoid the punishment for this particular vice it is suggested that while prayers and genuflections are useful, too much hard fasting may actually induce despair and should be avoided.<sup>18</sup> There is more about the aetiology of the sin in *Liber divinorum operum*, where she describes the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm and the influence of the humours in the human mind/body complex. In Book I, Vision 3, Chapter 9, she remarks that the clashing of the

<sup>16</sup> 'Maior est iniquitas mea etc. Ex desperatione dicit, quod maior est iniquitas sua, quam ea, quae ueniam mereri potest. Quae est blasphemia in spiritum sanctum. Qui enim desperat, aut minus bonum aut minus potentem Deum aestimat, tamquam omnia non possit aut alicuius saluti inuideat': In *Genesim*, in *Expositio super Heptateuchum*, ed. by Charles Lohr and Rainer Berndt, CCCM, 53 (1986), p. 41. For more on this see Bartholomew of Exeter's *Penitential*, ed. by Adrian Morey in *Bartholomew of Exeter, Bishop and Canonist: A Study in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), chap. 131, 'De peccato in Spiritum Sanctum': 'Quorundam uero probabilius, et magis auctoritatibus consentanea uidetur esse sententia, qui peccatum irremissibile, uel blasphemiam in spiritum sanctum dicunt esse peccatum inpenitentiae' (pp. 290–91).

<sup>17</sup> 'Eius etiam caput muliebri modo tenebroso uelamine tectum est, ac reliquum corpus tenebroso indumento indutum, quia intentio ipsius fragilis et infirma, ac tenebris desolationis et dubietatis circumdata': Hildegard von Bingen, *Liber uitae meritorum*, ed. by Angela Carlevaris, CCCM, 90 (1995) (hereafter *LVM*), bk III, chap. 41, p. 149.

<sup>18</sup> '[S]ed ut ponderosa ieiunia et alios graues labores arripiant eis non expedit, ne maiorem desperationem incendant': *LVM*, bk III, chap. 65, pp. 162–63, and compare *Liber divinorum operum*, ed. by Albert Derolez and Peter Dronke, CCCM, 92 (1996) (hereafter cited as *LDO*): 'quia per hanc incongruentem abstinentiam audacie et presumptionis temeritatem paruipendens se hoc modo perseuerare posse solummodo dubitat, sic que in laqueum desperationis corrui' (bk I, vis. 3, chap. 14, p. 131).

humours may sometimes induce a sense of false security (*iniustam securitatem*) or alternatively, lead one to desperation (*in desperationem*).<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand sometimes such despair just seems to be the work of the Devil, as we saw in the examples from Caesarius von Heisterbach described above.<sup>20</sup> This also appears to be the case with the Soul, in Hildegard's *Scivias*, who, 'resisting the Devil's whirlwind',<sup>21</sup> laments: '[H]e removes spiritual joy from me in the death dealing poison of wickedness, so that I can delight neither in man nor in God, thus inducing in me the doubt of desperation, that is to say, that I doubt (am uncertain) whether I can be saved or not.'<sup>22</sup> Apparently the Soul here has not taken the fateful step of completely losing faith in the possibility of salvation. So strictly speaking she should be said to be doubting, rather than despairing, which may account for the unusual phrase, 'doubt of desperation' that she employs to describe her condition. At all events the passage illustrates how doubt, lack of faith or trust, and desperation were all closely linked in the twelfth century.<sup>23</sup>

*De commendatione fidei*, written by Baldwin of Forde when he had retreated to the Cistercian monastery of Forde in Devon (1175–80) during the Becket controversy, includes various remarks on the nature of doubt. Since his treatise proceeds largely by considering what the Bible has to say on the subject of faith, he is somewhat constrained by having to accommodate the varying vocabulary of doubt he finds therein.<sup>24</sup> In the following Baldwin comments on a passage where 'hesitation' and 'faith' are linked. It concerns Abraham, as described by Paul

<sup>19</sup> 'Nam humores in homine hoc modo sepius inmutantur, quia cogitationes hominis huiusmodi turbinibus aliisque modis permutate illum nunc in iniustam securitatem, nunc in desperationem ducunt': *LDO*, bk I, vis. 3, chap. 9, p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> See pp. 74–75.

<sup>21</sup> 'Querela animae diabolicis turbinibus auxilio dei fortiter repugnantis' is the title of Chapter 4 in Book I, Vision 4 of *Scivias*, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> 'Sed in mortifero iniquitatis ueneno spiritale gaudium mihi aufert, ita quod nec in homine nec in Deo laetari ualeo, sic dubietatem desperationis mihi inducens, scilicet quod dubito utrum saluari possim an non': *Scivias*, bk I, vis. 4, chap. 6, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> In fact, in *LVM*, Part III, Chapter 41, desperation is said to 'follow in the footsteps' of faithlessness: 'et post uestigia infidelitatis hic incedit' (p. 149).

<sup>24</sup> For some reason the psychology of Doubting Thomas seems not to have engaged the imagination of medieval commentators as much as that of some other biblical figures. Perhaps his instant conversion from doubt to conviction left little room for such speculation. Hildegard von Bingen in *Liber divinorum operum* includes a brief characterization of him: 'fortes strenuosque mores ad usus hominum habuit, nec leuiter ad quamquam causam se conuertit nec ulli rei facile consensit' (pt II, vis. 5, chap. 9, p. 420), but even this degree of interest is unusual.



in Romans 4. 20 in the words 'Non hesitavit diffidentia' (He did not hesitate through distrust). The word *hesito* has a primary meaning of 'hold back', although the word can also simply mean 'doubt'.<sup>25</sup> Here he explains the relationship between faith, doubt, and hesitation: 'Hesitation is born of a lack of devotion, since it doubts the truth of faith and distrusts the promise of God.'<sup>26</sup> What this boils down to, if we disregard the reification, or possibly the personification of 'hesitation', is hesitation as 'theological doubt', that is, doubt directed towards matters of faith. He extends the idea by citing James 1. 6: 'Postulet autem in fide nichil hesitans' (You must ask in faith without any hesitation). Baldwin explains that this means both the asking and the faith should be 'without hesitation'. Here the dual meaning of *hesito* as to hold back (from action) and to doubt (a set of beliefs) is utilized.

Baldwin elaborates by explaining what it means to 'hesitate in faith'. This time he uses the example of how a hesitant person would act in such a case, rather than a reification or personification of the concept. He writes: 'Hesitation in faith is contrary to devotion. For he who hesitates in faith wavers and *is like a wave of the sea*, neither fully consenting nor fully dissenting.'<sup>27</sup> Here Baldwin rings the changes on the lexicon of doubt words, even to the counterintuitive idea of equating 'hesitation', whose primary meaning implies a lack of movement, with the 'fluctuations' of other doubt words.<sup>28</sup> He also notes that while someone who holds beliefs which are actually contrary to those of the faithful cannot be called a believer, the waverer or doubter who does not in fact assent to the faith is also reckoned a nonbeliever. This is founded on the uncompromising saying of Jesus in Matthew 12. 30: 'He who is not for me is against me.' Baldwin sums the argument up by saying: 'So whoever doubts, in so far as he doubts, does not believe because he does not agree or assent.'<sup>29</sup> This tacitly recognizes the continuum or

<sup>25</sup> See Flanagan 'Lexicographic and Syntactic Investigations', p. 229.

<sup>26</sup> 'Hesitatio de impietate nascitur, cum de fidei ueritate ambigitur, uel de Dei promissione diffiditur': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap.10, p. 352.

<sup>27</sup> 'Hesitatio autem in fide pietati contraria est. Qui enim in fide hesitat, fluctuat, et *similis est fluctui maris* [Jer. 1. 6], nec plene consentiens, nec plene dissentiens': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 10, p. 352.

<sup>28</sup> In this passage Baldwin also uses the word *ambigo* for doubt.

<sup>29</sup> 'Qui ergo dubitat, in quantum dubitat, non credit; quia non consentit, non acquiescit': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap.10, p. 352. This also seems to involve the notion of acceptance by introducing the idea that belief is somehow voluntary and to have some affinities with Augustine in *De praedestinatione sanctorum* where he describes belief as 'nihil aliud est, quam



incremental nature of belief and its obverse doubt, where assent to a set of beliefs is the limiting case. Baldwin adds a rider here that this stricture only applies to the things 'one [must] most firmly believe' and not to the things about which one is permitted to doubt (of which more later).

He then goes on in Chapter 11 to treat the slightly different case of hesitation in prayer. This is different from 'hesitation in faith' since it is 'not always born of damnable lack of devotion, but sometimes from human weakness and faint-heartedness or from imperfect faith'. Such hesitation (or doubt) may arise because it is sometimes hard to know 'what it is proper to pray for' (Rom. 8. 26). His advice on practical ways around the problem includes the prayer 'nethertheless not as I will but as you will' (Matt. 26. 39). He reiterates that such people (the righteous) although hesitant, do not doubt the faith. 'When they doubt in prayer because they are uncertain of being heard, or because they are unsure of the suitability of their petition, they do not hesitate through distrust in the faith.'<sup>30</sup>

### *Doubt and the Fall*

After this brief excursus into the relations between doubt, hesitation, despair, and lack of faith let us see how the themes are combined in some twelfth-century accounts of the Fall. In Sermon 4 (on the sacrament of the altar) Baldwin pays unusual attention to the various psychological stages in the transition from Eve's doubt about God's statement to disbelief in it.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that this is

cum assensione cogitare' (PL, XLIV, col. 963). For a contrasting view see L. Jonathan Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 40–44.

<sup>30</sup> '[I]lla, inquam, dubitatio non semper de dampnabili impietate, sed quandoque de humana infirmitate uel pusillanimitate uel fidei imperfectione nascitur. Iusti quipped sepe orant cum non exaudiuntur; sepe exaudiuntur cum se nesciunt exaudiri; sepe etiam ignorant quid orare debeant sicut oportet': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 11, p. 353. Further on this: 'In oratione uero, cum pro incertitudine exauditionis uel opportune petitionis dubitant, non tamen diffidentia hesitant. Huiusmodi enim dubitatio, quam et apostolus de Abraham negauit, cum diceret: *Non hesitauit diffidentia*, semper periculosa est, uereque fidei contraria, et a fideliter orantibus semper aliena': *ibid.*, chap. 11, pp. 355–56.

<sup>31</sup> For the Latin see Baldwin of Forde, *Opera*, Sermo 4, p. 74. Bell has translated the work in Baldwin of Ford [sic] *Spiritual Tractates*, 2 vols (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1986) as Tractate 1 (i, 52). If, as Bell suggests (i, 65), both parts of the sermon are addressed to priests it would probably date from after 1180 when Baldwin became Bishop of Worcester. This may explain why it is more developed than the account in *De commendatione fidei* (c. 1170s) which concentrates more on the Devil's role.

developed from the merest hint of Eve's dubious state of mind in Genesis 3. 3, that is, her use of the word *forte*, 'perhaps'.<sup>32</sup>

The word *forte* occurs in the Vulgate's account of the Fall, but not in the Old Latin version used by Augustine, so it can be assumed that here the elaboration of the role of doubt does not depend on his authority.<sup>33</sup> In his analysis of the event Baldwin makes use of generative metaphors, often found in discussions of virtues and vices,<sup>34</sup> followed by a vignette of a trial in which Eve's mental processes are dramatically externalized. This account is intercut with his elaboration of the narrative of the scene in the garden which, like much of the Old Testament, is notable for its compression.<sup>35</sup> Thus he writes:

For it can be seen that from doubt the sin of faithlessness and the crime of apostasy arose in mankind.<sup>36</sup> When the Tempter approached the woman he started up with a question loaded with doubt: 'Why had God commanded you not to eat etc.' As this question burst

<sup>32</sup> A few other twelfth-century writings on the Fall implicate doubt. For example, Hugh of St Victor's *De sacramentis* (written c. 1134): 'God affirmed, woman doubted, the Devil denied. However, the Devil would never have presumed to deny the words of God in the presence of the woman if he had not first found that woman to be doubtful. Therefore, she who doubted withdrew from affirmation and approached negation. She herself, then, to some extent began malice, who gave to the tempter the boldness of iniquitous persuasion' (Deus affirmavit; mulier dubitavit; diabolus negavit. Nequaquam autem diabolus coram muliere Verba Dei negare praesumpsisset, si non prius ipsam mulierem dubitantem invenisset. Quae ergo dubitavit ab affirmante recessit, et neganti appropinquavit. Ipsa igitur secundum aliquid inchoavit malitiam, quae tentatoris iniquae persuasionis dedit audaciam): PL, CLXXVI, col. 288. Doubt also occurs in some form in Andrew of St Victor, *In Genesim*, in *Expositio super heptateuchum*, ed. by Charles Lohr and Rainer Berndt, CCCM, 53 (1986), pp. 35–36, and Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones de diuersis*, Sermo 22, in *SBO*, VI, 172. However, in *In annuntiatione dominica*, Sermo 1, in *SBO*, V, 20, doubt seems to be less implicated and wilful distortion implied when he writes: 'primo quidem male detorquens quod audierat: *Morte morieris*, et dicens: *Ne forte moriamur*': Rupert von Deutz, *De sancta trinitate et operibus eius*, ed. by Rhabanus Haake, CCCM, 21, 22, 23, 24 (1971–72). *In Genesim* has, 'Diminuit uero quia cum certa et affirmatiua enuntiatione dixerat deus [...] haec dubium uel friuolum illud esse uolens ne forte inquit moriamur': CCCM, 21, bk III, p. 239.

<sup>33</sup> '[D]e fructu uero ligni, quod est in medio paradisi, praecepit nobis Deus ne comederemus, et ne tangeremus illud, ne forte moriamur': Genesis 3.

<sup>34</sup> Compare Bloomfield: vice *x* gives rise to vice *y*, or the way vices and virtues are represented as trees and fruits, or mothers and daughters (no doubt suggested by the gender of the nouns in Latin).

<sup>35</sup> See further Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 8–13.

<sup>36</sup> Apostasy is not generally taken as the main form of sin arising from the Fall. On this see Colish, *Peter Lombard*, I, 372–85.

upon the woman's mind, as if blown away by the hissing of the serpent and inflamed by the serpent's venom she became puffed up and hesitated, and soon her heart inclined to doubt and she said: 'Lest perhaps we die.' What she conceived in her doubting mind she expressed in a doubtful word and she recalled in doubt the words which God had spoken, and in the woman's heart a kind of trial was set in motion.<sup>37</sup>

Baldwin, who, as Abbot of Forde, was no stranger to legal proceedings and had often sat as judge delegate with Bartholomew of Exeter, sketches the judicial deliberations, using biblical phrasing, as follows:

The woman's proud reason sat *in the seat of pestilence* as the judge in the tribunal, and the word which God had spoken is led into court as the defendant. The serpent approaches as accuser and charges the defendant [God] with lying speech and says: 'You shall never die.' It is just as if he had said: 'False are the intimidating words with which God threatens death.'

There is now a shift of focus from the courtroom to the garden as Baldwin resumes:

Now the woman was not yet so struck by doubt as to fall, but she was wavering and *like a leaning wall and a tottering fence* and it was as if she still did not know whether to believe God's threat or the Devil's suggestion. Meanwhile she considered the tree in question, and saw that it was *good to eat and fair to the eyes and beautiful to behold*. The alluring appearance of the tree made it a powerful witness on behalf of the accuser. No sign of death appeared in it, so she could not surmise from this that what the accuser said was false or what God said was not. Furthermore the woman naturally loved life, which the serpent was promising, and equally had no love of death, which God was threatening. And having experienced life but never having experienced death, she preferred to follow that to which love and experience were drawing her. And thus, conquered at last, she stretched forth her hand to iniquity. So she was seduced, first being led from a question to a doubt and then from doubt to unfaithfulness until she believed what God had proclaimed was false.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup> 'A dubitatione enim cepisse uidetur peccatum infidelitatis et crimen apostasie in homine. Cum enim accederet temptator ad mulierem, a questione dubitationis baiula sic exorsus est: *Cur precepit uobis Deus ne comederetis*, et cetera? Vt questio animum mulieris pulsauit, quasi afflata sibilo serpentis et inflata ueneno serpentis, tumuit et hesit; et mox ad dubitationem cor inclinauit, dicens: *Ne forte moriamur*. 29. Dubitationem mente conceptam, uerbo dubitationis expressit, et sermonem quem Deus dixerat in dubium reuocauit, et in corde mulieris quasi causa quedam actitata est': Baldwin of Forde, *Opera*, Sermo 4, chaps 28–29, p. 74.

<sup>38</sup> 'Superba ratio mulieris quasi iudex sedebat pro tribunali uel *in cathedra pestilentie*; sermo quem Deus dixerat, quasi reus adducitur in medium. Accusator accessit serpens. Sermonem reum mendacii defert, et quasi crimen falsi intendit, dicens: *Nequaquam moriemini*. Perinde est ac si diceret: "Falsus est sermo comminatorius quo Deus mortem interminatus est." 30. Tunc mulier quasi adhuc dubia nondum impulsa ut omnino caderet, sed nutabunda, similisque *parieti inclinato et macerie depulse*; adhuc inter comminationem Dei et suggestionem diaboli quid crederet quasi

The more usual idea that the Fall was a result of pride<sup>39</sup> is alluded to here in the figure of ‘proud reason’ and developed further as he writes in Chapter 32, ‘In the woman, therefore, reason was corrupted by pride, for she doubted whether God’s word could be trusted. But it is wicked to doubt the words of God and impious not to do what he says.’<sup>40</sup> This leads Baldwin to the more general point that human reason should be humbled before God so as to accept as true what is beyond its understanding. Thus questioning is seen to be the Devil’s work, and indicates Baldwin’s distance from Abelard’s positive attitude towards doubting. It is significant that in this case, the serpent seems to take the initiative, by introducing the question which gives rise to Eve’s doubt. Other commentators identify the moment of doubt at different points.

We may compare this subtle psychological account, in which the Devil’s questioning gives rise to the doubt, with others from around the same time. Thus the Danish bishop, Anders Sunesen, in his metrical *Hexaameron* (c. 1200) has the Devil picking up on Eve’s pre-existing doubt rather than leading her into doubt by his original question:

[A]nd thus it happened that the reply given ‘Lest perhaps we die’ gave the enemy hope of persuading her to do what was forbidden. The serpent, not doubting to bend the doubting mind, confident in the art of harming said ‘You will not taste death, indeed you will be as Gods after eating, since you will know what things are good and what bad. God did not wish you to be like that, whence he forbad the food entirely from malice.’<sup>41</sup>

nescia: interim respexit lignum de quo agebatur, uiditque quod esset bonum ad uescendum, pulcrum oculis, et aspectu delictabile. Blandiente aspectu ligni ualuit totum hoc quasi ad testimonium pro parte accusatoris. Nullum enim signum mortis apparuit in ligno, unde putaretur accusator falsum dixisse uel Deus falsum non dixisse. Accesit ad hoc, quod mulier naturaliter uitam amabat quam serpens reprobantebat, et mortem eque non amabat quam Deus intentabat. Vsum quoque uite experta et mortis inexpert, magis sequebatur quo eam trahebant amor et experientia; et sic tandem uicta, manum suam extendit ad iniquitatem. Sic seducta est, et primum a questione ad dubitationem, et a dubitatione ad infidelitatem perducta, ut falsum crederet quod Deus predixerat: Baldwin of Forde, *Opera*, Sermo 4, pp. 74–75.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Et sicut de Eua omne genus processit, sic et de superbia omnia mala uitiorum exorta sunt: unde et diabolus eandem mulierem per superbiam superauit, cum ei ut pomum comederet persuasit’: *LVM*, pt III, chap. 49, p. 156. Also on current debates see Colish, *Peter Lombard*, I, 372–77. She only mentions doubt in connection with Hugh of St Victor.

<sup>40</sup> ‘Corrupta est itaque in muliere ratio per superbiam, quia de fide sermonis dubitauit. Non enim est fas de uerbis eius dubitare, et impium est sermonibus eius non acquiescere’: Baldwin of Forde, *Opera*, Sermo 4, chap. 32, p. 75.

<sup>41</sup> *Andreae Sunonis filii Hexaameron*, ed. by Sten Ebbesen and Laurentius Mortensen, *Corpus philosophorum danicorum Medii Aevi*, 11, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Gad, 1985), ll. 2106–115: ‘Ut

The same sequence of events is described more briefly in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*.<sup>42</sup>

The sympathetic understanding of the process on Baldwin's part is striking. Eve is led from her position of doubt, that is, makes her decision, on the basis of both reason and emotion. 'She had no experience of death, loved life etc.' This allows for a very human account of how decision-making involves both rational and emotional factors as we saw, for example, in the *Vita* of Robert of Béthune.<sup>43</sup>

### *The Fall as a Pattern for Temptation and Sinning*

In Baldwin's account, the Fall, specifically of Eve, is the source and pattern for human faithlessness. Other writers saw it as the template for all human sinning since it was said to involve the three-fold cord, woven from pride, covetousness and lust (or some variation on them).<sup>44</sup> We have also seen how it becomes a pattern for what medieval writers refer to more generally as 'temptations', both carnal and spiritual.<sup>45</sup>

To what extent was this just a convenient pictorial or metaphorical way of externalizing doubt, particularly spiritual doubt? We have seen in the case of Otloh how his doubts were graphically presented in the form of a dialogue with

sibi, quod uoluit, dicendi grata daretur | Euae responsis occasio, quaerere coepit; | et sic euenit, quoniam responsio talis | reddita 'Ne forte moriamur' praestitit Hosti | spem persuadendi uetutum. Qui, flectere mentem | non dubitans dubiam, confusus in arte nocendi | dixit 'Nequaquam mortem gustabitis, immo | uos eritis quasi di post esum, quippe scietis, | quae bona sint et quae mala; quales noluit esse | uos Deus, unde cibum solo liuore uetabat.'

<sup>42</sup> See Lombard, *Sententiae*, bk II, dist. 21, chap. 5, p. 406: 'Deus affirmavit; mulier quasi ambigendo illud dixit, diabolus negavit. Quae igitur dubitavit, ab affirmante recessit et neganti appropinquavit.' Here the cause of Eve's doubt is not raised. Anders Sunesen spent time as a pupil of Lombard in Paris.

<sup>43</sup> See pp. 40–43, above.

<sup>44</sup> See *Sermone in Annuntiatione dominica*, Sermo 1, in *SBO*, v, 20: 'Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur, curiositatis, voluptatis et vanitatis. Haec sola mundus habet, concupiscentiam carnis, concupiscentiam oculorum et superbiam vitae.' Or as in Peter Lombard, 'gula, vana gloria, avaritia' (*Sententiae*, bk II, dist. 21, chap. 5, p. 406).

<sup>45</sup> On this see further Columba Stewart, 'Evagrius Ponticus and the "Eight Generic Logismoi"', in *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard Newhauser (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), pp. 4–31, who also indicates the importance of the account of Jesus's own temptation for 'the applied demonology of the Egyptian desert' (p. 7).

the Devil. Moreover Otloh seemed to be in no doubt about the Devil's actual participation. In the case of Robert of Béthune his doubts are only partially externalized. He reports that it was 'as if I heard a voice whispering'.<sup>46</sup> We can see why displacing the temptation from an internal debate to an external one might be attractive in terms of lessening the doubter's responsibility. Peter Lombard makes this manoeuvre explicit when he discusses the difference between 'internal' and 'external' temptation. He has already noted, in the context of the fall of Lucifer, that his sin was worse because it was self-generated and not made at the suggestion of someone else. The fact that Eve fell at the suggestion of the Devil, in the form of the serpent, meant that she and all humankind might be redeemed through the actions of another.<sup>47</sup>

### *Epistemology of Doubt: Peter Abelard*

So much for the psychological aspects of doubt. Doubt considered from an epistemological or philosophical point of view can best be approached by seeing where twelfth-century writers located doubt in the semantic field of words relating to faith and knowledge.<sup>48</sup> It was customary for accounts of the nature of faith to start from St Paul's (apparent) definition in Hebrews 11. 1: 'Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the proof of unseen realities.'<sup>49</sup> Abelard's own definition of faith, which was to cause so much trouble, occurs at the beginning of his treatise *Theologia 'scholarium'*.<sup>50</sup> Characteristically, he set out to analyse the form of words

<sup>46</sup> '[A]udit a sinistris tamquam lenem serpentis sibilum et tanquam uocem in cogitatione susurrantem': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 6<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> 'Quod si ita fuit, non igitur alterius suggestione prius peccavit, cum auctoritas tradat, ideo peccatum diaboli incurabile esse, quia non suggestione, sed propria superbia cecidit; hominis vero curabile, quia non per se, sed per alium cecidit, et ideo per alium surgere potuit': Lombard, *Sententiae*, bk II, dist. 22, chap. 1, p. 410.

<sup>48</sup> 'All credal feelings, whether weak or strong, share the distinctive feature of constituting some kind of orientation on the "True or False?" issue in relation to their propositional objects, whereas affective mental feelings, like those of anger or desire, constitute some kind of orientation on the "Good or bad?" issue': Cohen, *An Essay*, p. 11. *Despair, incredulity, disbelief, doubt, uncertainty, suspicion, faith, confidence, conviction* are among his examples of 'credal feelings'.

<sup>49</sup> 'Est autem fides sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium': Hebrews 11. 1. The extent to which this is taken to be a 'definition', rather than, say, a description, goes some way to explaining the different approaches taken by those who commented on it.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Abelard, *Theologia 'scholarium'*, ed. by Eloi M. Buytaert and Constant J. Mews, CCCM, 13 (1987), pp. 313–549: pt I, p. 318.

found in St Paul's definition with the tools of dialectic. At first sight this would seem reasonable, since both *substantia* and *argumentum* were terms of dialectical art. The possible objection that St Paul was not dialectically trained is perhaps overcome by Abelard's belief that at Pentecost the disciples were, in fact, given such philosophical knowledge.<sup>51</sup> Abelard initially concentrates on the second part of the definition, rephrasing it as 'the *existimatio*' (opinion, judging, judgement) of things not apparent, that is, not present to the bodily senses. The point here is that Abelard was not so concerned with the first part of the definition (what faith was) but with the objects of faith, that is, what the word *faith* might properly be applied to: viz 'rerum non apparentium' that is, not just things which are contingently unseen, but things which are unable to be grasped by the bodily senses. Later in the treatise, where he briefly elaborates the Apostle's definition, he uses *probatio* or 'proof' as a synonym for *argumentum*. This suggests that the intended meaning of *existimatio*, as a synonym for *argumentum* (usually translated as 'proof'), was indeed rather closer to 'proof' than 'opinion'. His main aim was to distinguish faith from *cognitio* or *agnitio*, both varieties of knowledge. These words, he maintained, could only rightly be applied to recognition or apprehension of things which were visible or otherwise knowable through the senses. He goes on to treat the word *substantia* (which had even more vexed philosophical meaning) by stating that in this context it simply means 'foundation and origin'.

Nonetheless, Guillaume de St-Thierry (c. 1085–1148) was able to raise alarmist fears from this account by declaring in his missive to St Bernard that Peter Abelard defines faith as 'the opinion (*aestimationem*) of things not seen' and goes on to exclaim, 'Heaven forbid that Christian faith [here seen as a set of propositions] should be so limited, that is to say that they are judgements [*aestimationes*], judgements or opinions [*opinionones*] that is to say, of the academicians whose custom it is to believe nothing, to know nothing, but judge everything.'<sup>52</sup> Bernard

<sup>51</sup> Abelard says in his *Soliloquium* (which owes something to Augustine's work of the same name) that the gifts given to the Apostles at Pentecost would 'make them perfect as much in speech as in knowledge, so that they would be able to explain fully what they perfectly understood'. Thus they could be said to have become 'true logicians'. See 'Peter Abelard "Soliloquium": A Critical Edition', ed. by Charles Burnett, *Studi Medievali*, ser. 3, 25 (1984), 857–94 (p. 890).

<sup>52</sup> For an account of this dispute see the series of articles in *Revue Bénédictine*: Jean Leclercq, 'Les Formes Successives de la Lettre-Traité de Saint Bernard contre Abélard', *RB*, 78 (1968), 87–105, and 'Les Lettres de Guillaume de Saint-Thierry à Saint Bernard', *RB*, 79 (1969), 375–91; Constant J. Mews, 'The Lists of Heresies Imputed to Peter Abelard', *RB*, 95 (1985), 73–111. Guillaume wrote his *Disputatio* (PL, CLXXX, cols 249–82) against Abelard probably in 1138 or



of Clairvaux, working this up further, comes close to converting Abelard's definition of faith into one of doubt: 'You rave to me of doubt [*ambiguum*] concerning that thing, than which nothing is more certain.'<sup>53</sup> The fear of admitting uncertainty into the faith here seems to be Bernard's chief worry. We can follow his line of thought more clearly in his *De Consideratione*, Book V, Chapter 6 (c. 1153), which contains the sentence 'Therefore, as I have said, faith does not have any uncertainty, if it has, it is not faith, but opinion'.<sup>54</sup> It should be noted here that Bernard does not distinguish between subjective and objective faith (i.e., the faith by which a thing is believed and the thing which is believed) but tends to use the word ambiguously or perhaps ambivalently so that both meanings are included.

Bernard's charge was that Abelard, by disallowing the description of 'knowledge' to faith, seemed to be undermining its certainty and suggesting that it was somehow subject to human judgement, or worse, merely a tissue of human opinions. Although this is a misreading of Abelard's intention (and indeed, a misreading of his words as they have come down to us), the relation of faith to knowledge and the assertion of its certainty continued to exercise thinkers throughout the century, as we shall see.

### *Epistemology of Faith: Hugh of St Victor*

A second interesting example of an effort to locate the epistemological status of faith and doubt (and one which proved less controversial) was Hugh of St Victor's analysis of believing/doubting from *De sacramentis*. After essaying an explanation of St Paul's definition of faith in Hebrews 11. 1, he concluded that it was more an explanation of what faith does and adds, 'If anyone wishes to note a full and general definition of faith he can say that "faith is a kind of certainty of the mind concerning things absent, established beyond opinion but short of knowledge."' Hugh expands on this statement with the following examples:

1139 and sent it with a letter to Bernard of Clairvaux and Geoffroy, Bishop of Chartres (PL, CLXXXII, cols 531–33). 'Absit enim ut hos fines habeat christiana fides aestimationes scilicet siue opinionones academicorum sint aestimationes istae quorum sententia est nihil credere nihil scire sed omnia aestimare': *Disputatio*, PL, CLXXX, col. 249.

<sup>53</sup> 'Tu mihi ambiguum garris, quo nihil est certius [...] absit ut hos fines fides habeat christiana Academicorum sint istae aestimationes, quorum est dubitare de omnibus, scire nihil': Bernard of Clairvaux, Ep. 190, in *SBO*, VIII, 25.

<sup>54</sup> 'Ergo, ut dixi, fides ambiguum non habet, aut, si habet, fides non est, sed opinio': Bernard of Clairvaux, *De consideratione*, bk V, in *SBO*, III, 471.



- (1) There are some who immediately repel with the mind what they hear and deny those things which are said, and these are the naysayers.
- (2) Others, from those things which they hear, select one side or the other for consideration but they do not assent to its affirmation.
- (3) For although they believe one of the two sides as more probable, yet they do not presume to assert whether it is indeed the one that is true. These are the conjecturers (scrupulous, not fully convinced).
- (4) Others thus approve a particular side, so that they admit its approval even by asserting it. These are the believers.
- (5) After these kinds of cognition that more advanced kind follows, when a thing is made known, not from hearing alone, but through its presence. For they know more perfectly who comprehend the thing itself, as it is, in their presence. These are the knowers.
- (6) For the first are the naysayers, the second the doubters, the third are the scrupulous, the fourth the believers, the fifth the knowers.

The reader will note that there seems to be a problem here with the text (this being preferable to the assumption that there is something wrong with the structure of Hugh's argument). Hugh names five separate classes in section 6 but only four seem to be identified in sections 1–5; the 'doubters' are inexplicably absent. I suggest that 'These are the doubters' should come after 'do not assent to its affirmation' in section 2. Perhaps there is also something missing from section 3 which purports to describe the 'scrupulous' since it now begins with 'although'.<sup>55</sup> Hugh summarizes his argument as follows

From this, therefore, it can be conjectured why we have called faith certainty, since when there is still doubt, there is no faith. It is clear also why we say that the certainty which we call faith was established beyond opinion or conjecture and short of knowledge. Since,

<sup>55</sup> I had thought that the problem lay with the text in Migne but information from Rainer Berndt of the St-Georgen-Institut, who is working on the new critical edition of *De sacramentis*, confirms Migne's reading, apart from some minor changes, which I have incorporated into the text below. It should be noted, however, that he does not endorse my suggestions for further amending the text. "Fidem esse certitudinem quamdam animi de rebus absentibus, supra opinionem et infra scientiam constitutam." Sunt enim quidam qui audita statim animo repellunt et contradicunt his quae dicuntur: et hii sunt negantes. Alii in iis quae audiunt alteram quamcunque partem eligunt ad existimationem, sed non approbant affirmationem. Quamvis enim unum est duobus magis probabile intelligunt, utrum tamen adhuc idipsum verum sit asserere non praesumunt: hii sunt estimantes. Alii sic alteram partem approbant, ut ejus approbationem etiam in assertionem assumant: hii sunt credentes. Post illa genera cognitionis illud profectius sequitur cum rem non ex audito solo, sed per suam praesentiam notificatur. Profectius enim agnoscunt qui ipsam rem ut est in sua praesentia comprehendunt: hii sunt scientes. Primi ergo sunt negantes, secundi dubitantes, tertii estimantes, quarti credentes, quinti scientes': Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, PL, CLXXVI, col. 330.

assuredly, to believe something is, as it were, less than to know it, so it is also more than to conjecture or opine. I say 'less' not in so far as pertains to merit but in so far as pertains to cognition.<sup>56</sup>

There are several comments that could be made here. First, Hugh's method is reminiscent of what is called 'ordinary language philosophy' today. He asks how people may react to a statement in terms of their credal attitudes to it and then describes a spectrum of responses from negation to assent.

Let us reconstruct the steps of his argument. Suppose someone hears the statement 'The soul lives on after the death of the body'. In section 1 Hugh explains how some people (the *negantes*) will deny this immediately, presumably because they do not believe it. (It should be noted here that Hugh combines, sometimes explicitly and sometimes implicitly, the belief/doubt continuum with the denial/assent continuum). He seems to be assessing the person's state of belief by whether they are prepared to deny, or assent to, or indeed to affirm or assert, the proposition. This seems straightforward enough, but in the following statements, 2–5, a complication is introduced with the mention of 'sides' or 'parts'. Hugh now seems to be treating the original 'things said' as a combination of a statement and its negation. This was a common way of looking at statements that might be questioned, as in this case. I will have more to say about such matters in connection with Abelard in Chapter 5. Thus the second group is said to 'select either side or the other' — this presumably means they may indiscriminately settle for 'the soul lives on after the body' or 'the soul does not live on after the body'. Still, they do not incline to one position rather than the other (and certainly do not assert either to be true). This would seem to be a perfect description of 'doubters' (the uncertain) who have no fixed preference for one side of the question more than the other and are located right in the middle of the doubt continuum.

Hugh then suggests another category in section 3, 'the scrupulous', who although they tend to believe one side — for example, 'the soul lives on after the body' — rather than its negation, are not prepared to affirm it. These people would also belong among the doubters, although located further towards the positive (affirmation) end of the scale. In section 4 the 'believers', because they are certain

<sup>56</sup> 'Ex his ergo conjici potest quare fidem certitudinem appellamus, quoniam ubi adhuc dubitatio est fides non est. Patet etiam quare ipsam certitudinem quam fidem appellamus supra opinionem uel aestimationem, et infra scientiam dicimus esse constitutam. Quia nimirum aliquid credere sicut minus est quam scire; sic plus est quam opinari et aestimare. Minus dico non quantum ad meritum, sed quantum ad cognitionem': Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, PL, CLXXVI, cols 330–31.

(i.e., at the positive limit of the doubt-scale), approve the proposition and are prepared to affirm it.

Yet according to Hugh, such certainty is not knowledge. For this, something extra has to be added to belief or certainty, which he describes as the presence of the thing that is known. For our example, presumably a sighting of souls after death, such as was vouchsafed to Caesarius's recluse, would suffice.<sup>57</sup>

From this we can see how belief (or in this context, faith) excludes any degree of doubt or uncertainty. The 'naysayers' do not feel certainty in the truth of the proposition; indeed they feel certainty in its negation; the 'doubters' do not feel certainty, being equally balanced between the belief and denial (as in the classical form of doubt as *aporia*); the 'scrupulous' although inclining to one side rather than the other do not feel certain enough to affirm it. The 'believers', being completely certain, can assert what they believe (i.e., their faith). Finally, their faith becomes knowledge when they come face to face with what they have previously taken on faith/believed. In this context faith is a special sort of belief which is underpinned by trust in its supra-natural foundations.<sup>58</sup>

In a similar manner, it might be said that someone believes in (has faith in) the results of some piece of medical research because that person has faith in (trusts) the scientific credentials of the researchers and, perhaps more importantly, in their integrity. (i.e., they are not going to fake the results). But the researchers, being human, would not warrant the absolute faith believers are meant to have in God.

### *Epistemology of Faith and Doubt: Baldwin of Forde*

How does this compare with Baldwin's discussion of faith as found in his extended treatise on the subject, *The Commendation of Faith*.<sup>59</sup> First, the scope of Baldwin's investigation of faith is much broader than that of the two previous thinkers. Baldwin attempts to build up a picture of faith considered from various points of view, including that of objective versus subjective faith (i.e., the faith vs faith) In the course of this survey, doubt is examined in the context of its

<sup>57</sup> See pp. 74–75.

<sup>58</sup> How that faith is obtained is another problem. It is at the same time a theological virtue, and requires an act of will to persist, but it is also a gift of God and cannot be produced by unaided effort in a human.

<sup>59</sup> This is title by which the work is known in English; see Baldwin of Forde, *The Commendation of Faith*, though a better idea of its contents might be given if it were called something like 'An Exhortation to Faith' or simply, 'In Praise of Faith'.

appearance in passages from the Bible (as we saw earlier). But doubt can also be viewed through the lens of faith or belief. Baldwin's method is thus to pick up references to faith throughout the Old and New Testaments, and to construct a composite picture of what it is, how it works, how it can be obtained, and so on. Inevitably he has to deal with the Pauline pronouncement. He devotes three chapters to this, beginning with Chapter 13, entitled 'On the Certainty of Faith'. David N. Bell has pointed out in several places that Baldwin seems here to be replying directly to Abelard,<sup>60</sup> although he is also echoing Hugh of St Victor, who, as we have seen, describes faith as a 'kind of certainty'. Where Baldwin differs from Hugh is in placing faith above, rather than below, knowledge.

In this chapter Baldwin explains why faith can be called knowledge ('ut recte scientia dici possit'). He does not define faith as knowledge but takes his cue from several passages in the Bible where various people claim to know what are generally held to be articles of faith.<sup>61</sup> He writes that it is 'because we trust in God and believe in God through faith, and since God is Truth, that the same faith should be underpinned with such great certainty, such great firmness of non-doubting assent that it can rightly be called knowledge'.<sup>62</sup> Or, in other words, '[S]ince God is to be believed/trusted above either the bodily senses or human reasons, the dignity of faith goes above and beyond all mundane knowledge, seeing the invisible, sensing the insensible, comprehending the incomprehensible'.<sup>63</sup> Thus God is the personal guarantor of faith who also makes it objectively true. The way this works is more by association of ideas rather than strict logical entailment. This is also true of Chapter 15, 'Of that which Is Written: "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for"', which once again deploys a fine array of 'doubt' words. He starts out by saying that the Apostle 'puts usefulness first and then adds certainty' which seems to echo, at least in part, Hugh of St Victor's idea that the Pauline definition of faith is more about what faith does than what it is.

<sup>60</sup> See Baldwin of Forde, *Commendation*, p. 79 n. 1; David N. Bell, 'Certitudo Fidei: Faith, Reason and Authority in the Writings of Baldwin of Forde', in *Bernardus Magister*, ed. by John R. Sommerfeldt (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Press, 1992), pp. 249–75.

<sup>61</sup> For example, commending faith of Abraham, Rom. 4. 20–21; 2 Tim. 1. 12; II Tim. 3. 1; Job 19. 25; II Cor. 5. 1, and more in chap. 13.

<sup>62</sup> 'Quoniam per fidem in Deo fidimus et Deo credimus, cum Deus ueritas sit, tanta certitudine, tanta non dubie assensionis firmitate eadem fides debet esse subnixa, ut recte scientia dici possit': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 13, p. 361.

<sup>63</sup> 'Cum enim Deo magis credendum sit, quam uel sensibus corporis uel humanis rationibus, omnem mundanam sapientiam fidei dignitas superexcellit, inuisibilia uidens, insensibilia sentiens, incomprehensibilia comprehendens': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 13, p. 361.

Thus in explaining what ‘the substance of things to be hoped for’ means, Baldwin distinguishes temporal goods, spiritual goods, and eternal goods (*bona temporalia, bona spiritualia, bona eterna*) as the things to be hoped for. He goes on to say that ‘[f]aith is the way by which the things that are to be sought from Him, hoped for and desired are obtained from God, either in hope or in reality’. This is summed up as succinctly as ‘a righteous person thus lives by faith’, Romans 1. 17.<sup>64</sup>

He concludes his description of faith as follows:

Faith [and here he seems to be running together the meanings of faith as a set of beliefs and the propositional attitude towards faith i.e. ‘a kind of certainty’] therefore, does not depend on human reason to acquiesce to the truth, but by assenting to the words of God, it is sufficient in itself for the certainty of truth. Therefore it is said to be ‘the proof of things unseen’, because it approves what is unseen by a true and certain assent.<sup>65</sup>

Baldwin then goes on to show that he is using *argumentum* in a double (also non-technical sense) where he distinguishes between ‘the proof which is faith itself’ and the ‘proof by which faith is increased.’<sup>66</sup> This explanation depends once more on biblical rather than logical vocabulary, referring as it does to the many ‘proofs’ (Acts 1. 3) exhibited to the disciples by Jesus after the resurrection, whereby he strengthened their faith, even though, he adds somewhat paradoxically, in order to reaffirm the Pauline definition, ‘that faith itself was a proof, acknowledging with infallible assent the unseen realities’.<sup>67</sup> Thus in forming his definition Baldwin takes a wider view than the two previous thinkers, by drawing more broadly on a range of biblical passages and on the life of Christ and thus building up a contextual definition of faith.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> ‘Fides enim causa est, per quam a Deo obtinentur, uel in re uel in spe, que ab ipso petenda sunt, speranda et desideranda. *Iustus nimirum ex fide uiuit*’: Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 14, p. 363.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Fides ergo non humana ratione nititur, ut acquiescat ueritati, sed uerbis Dei assentiens, ipsa sibi sufficit ad certitudinem ueritatis. Propterea argumentum dicitur esse rerum *non apparentium*, quia uera et certa assensione non apparentia approbat’: Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 14, p. 364.

<sup>66</sup> ‘Aliud est argumentum quod est ipsa fides; aliud est argumentum quo astruitur ipsa fides’: Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 15, p. 364.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Nam Christus *in multis argumentis per dies quadraginta apparens* discipulis, et fidem resurrectionis sue astruere uolens, multa argumenta foris exhibuit [...]. [E]t nichilominus ipsa fides argumentum esset, infallibili assensione non apparentia comprobans’: Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 15, p. 364.

<sup>68</sup> In fact, his method is similar to Paul’s elaboration in Chapter 11 of Romans where he gives examples of how various biblical figures operated ‘by faith’.

We might then compare the three methods and the different conclusions they reach. Baldwin's method of building up a picture of faith by trying to assemble all its biblical occurrences is like a mosaic, although it could also be seen as a kind of historical approach. This may be contrasted with Abelard's method of unpicking (analysing) St Paul's statement logically and with Hugh of St Victor's 'common language' methodology. The consensus, such as it is, seems to be that since faith is a kind of certainty (whatever its relation to knowledge) then doubt has no place in it. Furthermore, where doubt can admit of degrees, faith cannot. Thus it would seem that doubt and faith are not strictly contraries, which can be explained by picturing their relative positions on the doubt continuum.

### *Legitimate and Illegitimate Doubt*

Whatever twelfth-century writers had to say about the nature of doubt itself there was a further question about what it was legitimate to doubt or be uncertain about. While it was recognized that doubt, *qua* propositional attitude, had the logical potential to make everything its subject (even if only madmen might doubt what everyone else believed), some topics were nevertheless seen as off limits. To approach this from a neutral, that is, nonreligious position, we can take John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, Book VII, Chapter 6. Here, in the course of describing the philosophical schools of the ancients, he writes: 'For a wise man there are doubtful matters concerning which neither the authority of faith nor the senses nor manifest reason is conclusive, and which are supported on either side by arguments.'<sup>69</sup> Among such matters he lists questions/doubts about providence; the substance, quantity, strength, efficacy, and origin of the soul; fate and natural inclinations; chance and free will; matter and motion and the origin of bodies; limits of multiplication and division; time and place; number and language; friction; divisibility and indivisibility; sound; status of universals; virtues and vices; whether all sins are equal and are punished equally; causes of things and their opposition; ebb and flow of the oceans; source of the Nile; influence of the moon on bodily fluids; contracts and other suits (law); nature and its works; truth and the earliest origins of things; whether angels have their own bodies.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> 'Sunt autem dubitabilia sapienti quae nec fidei nec sensus aut rationis manifestae persuadet auctoritas et quae suis in utramque partem nituntur firmamentis': John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, bk VII, chap. 2 (II, 98).

<sup>70</sup> See John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, bk VII, chap. 2 (II, 98–99). I have not been able to ascertain whether John of Salisbury was the originator of this list or whether he adopted it from some earlier writer. But it is clear that although Peter of Blois suggests (PL, CCVII, Ep. 101,

The assumption here is that pursuing such questions, some of which we would now assign to physics, metaphysics, mathematics, epistemology, jurisprudence, cosmology, or geography, while apparently not capable of definitive solution, is perfectly legitimate. In this way they are comparable to the mundane doubts examined earlier, and subject to the same range of methods of solution.<sup>71</sup>

But there is a question on John's list which is of a rather different kind, being a question about the scope of questioning itself. The final matter about which wise men may legitimately hold differing opinions is the question of 'what may piously be asked about God Himself who exceeds investigation by all rational natures'.<sup>72</sup> During the twelfth century, the more questions that were being raised on this subject, the more various authorities (from Bernard of Clairvaux, to the University of Paris) sought to limit their scope. Even John apparently did not mean that all questions about God were equally debatable, since he declared in the next chapter of the *Policraticus*, in the course of describing propositions (systems of belief) that are underpinned by 'the authority of the senses, reason, or religion' that to doubt, for example, 'whether God exists, is wise and good' is 'not only irreligious but treacherous'.<sup>73</sup>

### *Doubt and the Faith*

The difference between belief or opinions about secular subjects and what is referred to loosely as 'faith' in the medieval (or even modern) context is largely dictated by the nature of the propositions involved. While the tenets of Christian

col. 312) that these were questions actually raised in his time in Paris, he has appropriated much of John of Salisbury's list. See John Baldwin's note on this in *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and his Circle*, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), II, 56, and Philippe Delehay, 'Un témoignage frauduleux de Pierre de Blois sur la pédagogie du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle,' *RTAM*, 14 (1947), 329–31.

<sup>71</sup> In the areas of natural philosophy, consulting authoritative texts still played a large role. However, in the course of the twelfth century, their scope was widened by including Arabic authorities both for translations of classical Greek texts and their later commentaries. Actual observation, both of the heavenly bodies and earthly creatures, and other natural phenomena was also increasing. Some examples of scholars engaged in extending such fields are Adelard of Bath, Guillaume de Conches, Daniel of Morely, and Gerald of Wales. See further, Antonia Gransden, 'Realistic Observation in Twelfth-Century England', *Speculum*, 47 (1972), 29–51.

<sup>72</sup> '[...] et quae pie quaeruntur de ipso Deo qui totius naturae rationalis excedit inuestigationem': John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, bk VII, chap. 2 (II, 99).

<sup>73</sup> 'Qui uero an Deus sit deducit in quaestionum et an idem potens sapiens sit an bonus, non modo irreligiosus sed perfidus est': John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, bk VII, chap. 7 (II, 115).



religion can be stated in propositional form, they differ from statements about the source of the Nile because they are thought to rest in some sense on the quasi-personal guarantee of the words and promises of a deity (however mediated by being written down in the Old and New Testaments or later by other divinely inspired commentators).<sup>74</sup> This is where the double sense of belief and trust is invoked in the word *faith*. Thus, (1) objects of faith are tenets of religion (some of which can be grasped by the intellect and so in some sense can be *known*, while others, as promises, or as counter-to-reason, etc., cannot), although we should remember that for Baldwin faith was something beyond knowledge; and (2) because of this, belief in a theological context acquires a quasi-personal flavour as in 'faith in' someone, e.g. God (by whom, as Truth, this is all somehow guaranteed). Consequently it was also seen as a gift (grace) that could be repudiated or refused.

Thus doubt, as lack of faith, in this context is not just failure to believe but also implies a rejection of what or who should be believed. This was seen as tantamount to disloyalty by implicitly or explicitly preferring the counsels of God's enemy, the Devil, as we saw in the case of Eve and the serpent.

But even in religious matters distinctions could be drawn. Baldwin of Forde wrote, 'Just as it is impious to doubt the things one ought most firmly to believe, doubting the things about which one is allowed to be ignorant is not impious.'<sup>75</sup> What, then, are the things 'most firmly to be believed'? Baldwin does not give a direct answer in this passage, but in his *Sermo 4, On the Eucharist*, he writes:

So in the case of heavenly mysteries and divine sacraments every impious doubt should be cast far from our heart, and all inquisitive questioning reigned in, so that faith, which possesses the conviction of truth, should also possess a pious ignorance. For the wisdom of God is incomprehensible and cannot be compressed into the narrow limits of human reason.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Just who was accorded such inspiration was a moot point; some twelfth-century writers were less inclined to accord this to the Fathers of the Church than others. Despite the pictures which show Gregory the Great being instructed by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove (e.g., the page from his *Register* at the Stadtsbibliothek, Trier) Abelard liked to point out the human frailty of the Fathers, citing, among other things, St Augustine's *Retractationes*.

<sup>75</sup> 'Sicut autem impia est illa dubitatio qua dubia sunt que firmissime credere oportet, ita impia non est illa dubitatio qua dubia sunt que ignorare licet': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 10, p. 352. 'Doubting' here apparently covers a range from denying to 'being uncertain about' and hence segues into 'questioning'. Abelard, in *Theologia 'scholarium'* (bk I, chap. 15, p. 325), says that such questions as whether it will rain tomorrow (i.e. God will make it rain tomorrow) or God will save this or that person, are non-important questions about God which can be doubted.

<sup>76</sup> 'Propterea in celestibus mysteriis et diuinis sacramentis, omnis impia dubitatio a corde nostro procul pellenda est, omnis curiosa inquisitio compescenda est, ut fides, que habet ueritatis



In such matters Baldwin seems to allow for the possibility that doubts and questions might arise and indicates how they should be suppressed by what seems to be a conscious closing down of lines of rational enquiry.

We must look to his longer work *On the Sacrament of the Altar* for an example of the kind of thing that might be piously doubted. When discussing the witnesses of the different Gospel accounts of the Last Supper he remarks:

The garbled order of the narration does not prejudice the truth of what was done. Nor is it impious to be uncertain about [*dubitare*] who changed the order, if indeed it was changed, or to doubt whether Christ said again, a second time, the words about not drinking. In these kinds of doubts the devotion of the faith is not endangered nor does faith in the Gospel waver so long as we believe without doubt what they say was done or said.<sup>77</sup>

In a slightly different way we are allowed to be uncertain of *how* transubstantiation occurs but not *that* it does:

Simply, therefore and confidently, firmly and constantly let us hold, believe and confess that the substance of the bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ, yet retaining the appearance of bread, marvellously and ineffably and incomprehensibly. We believe without doubt that it is so, but as yet how this might be we simply do not know.<sup>78</sup>

## Creeds

Baldwin has given one specific example of what should be believed, that is, the fact of transubstantiation, but there was a more basic and general idea that all that was required for salvation, and hence needed to be believed, was enunciated in the

conscientiam, habeat etiam piam ignorantiam. Incomprehensibilis enim Dei sapientia inter angustias humane rationis coartari non potest': Baldwin of Forde, *Sermo de sacramento altaris*, in *Opera*, p. 76.

<sup>77</sup> For Baldwin's much longer treatise, *De sacramento altaris*, see *Le Sacrement de L'Autel*, ed. and trans. by J. Morson and E. de Solms, SCH, 93, 94, 2 vols (1963): 'Ordo autem narrationis praeposterus veritati rei gestae non praejudicat. Non est autem impium dubitare quis ordinem mutaverit, si tamen mutatus est; vel dubitare an Christus secundo et iterum verba de non bibendo dixerit. In hujusmodi dubitationibus non periclitatur pietas fidei, nec vacillat fides evangelii, dummodo indubitanter credamus quae facta vel dicta narrantur' (I, 174–75).

<sup>78</sup> 'Simpliciter ergo et confidenter, firmiter et constanter, teneamus, credamus et confiteamur, quod substantia panis in substantiam carnis Christi mutatur, manente tamen specie panis, mirabiliter et ineffabiliter et incomprehensibiliter. Indubitanter credimus quia ita est: quomodo autem hoc sit adhuc simpliciter ignoramus': Baldwin of Forde, *De sacramento*, I, 210, and cf. Baldwin of Forde, *Opera*, Sermo 4, chap. 37, p. 76.

Creed. During the twelfth century there were three principal creeds simultaneously in use by the Western Church. The so-called Apostles' Creed (*Credo in Deum patrem*) was the simplest, and being the baptismal creed could be regarded as the lowest common denominator.<sup>79</sup> It had long been recommended to the faithful, together with the Lord's Prayer, for recitation on rising and going to bed. On the other hand, the Nicene Creed (*Credo in unum Deum*) — or more properly the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed — formulated in response to the Arian heresy, was also in common use and was probably best known from its incorporation into the Mass.

The so-called Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque vult*), the most theologically sophisticated of the three, was used daily by the regular clergy at Prime. There seems to be a general understanding that they all represented the Christian faith and often mention is made simply of 'the creed' as if there were only one.<sup>80</sup> Thus according to Peter Lombard's definition, 'The creed is said to be a sign or a collection since by it the faithful are discerned from the faithless; a collection since there the sufficiency and integrity of the entire faith is collected.'<sup>81</sup> But which creed did he have in mind? Since he talks about sorting the faithful from the unfaithful, it sounds as if he was referring to the more elaborated version. The process of refining and expanding the declaration of the faith continued with what was virtually a new creed promulgated at Lateran IV (1215) in the face of what was generally seen by the Church as a proliferation of heretical ideas over the previous century, though it did not displace the original three creeds in liturgical use.

<sup>79</sup> On the historical development of the various creeds and confessions see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Cf. Godfrey (or Irimbirt) of Admont's Homily 12, in PL, CLXXIV, col. 1112: 'Licet enim patriarchae et prophetae multa fecerint, multa docuerint, plus his omnibus valet magis que necessarium est humanae saluti solum symbolum fidei, quod sancti docuerunt apostoli.'

<sup>80</sup> Thus Herman of Tournai in Chapter 77 of *Liber de restauratione*, describing the death of a pious scribe, recounts the words of the priest, Godfrey (c. 1126): 'when he had been lain down, he asked me to read to him the Catholic faith, that is, "Whosoever wishes"' (Depositio ergo rogavit me, ut ei fidem catholicam, id est *Quicumque vult*, legerem): MGH SS, 14, p. 312.

<sup>81</sup> 'Symbolum dicitur signum uel collatio, signum, quia eo fideles ab infidelibus discernuntur; collatio, quia ibi totius fidei sufficientia et integritas collata est': Lombard, *Sententiae*, bk IV, dist. 6, chap. 7 (II, 276).

### *Creed as Proof of Orthodoxy*

The use of different creeds (or perhaps we should say different versions of the creed) for different sorts of people is indicated by the following comparison. The *Penitential* of Bartholomew of Exeter († 1184) considers belief and knowledge of the faith in the context of confession. The increased use of individual, as opposed to public and general, confession in the twelfth century provided an opportunity for wider monitoring of beliefs and, apparently, wider teaching of the theological basics (all of which was given the official imprimatur in the declaration of Lateran IV, *Omnis utriusque sexus*). But this was only the culmination of a long process. Bartholomew writes:

Whosoever therefore seeks his penitence from God and the priest should first be diligently questioned concerning the Catholic faith, so that either the less believing can be instructed and strengthened, or if they believe in the orthodox manner, their faith may be confessed orally from memory in the solemn words of the creed.<sup>82</sup>

This expectation is more ambitious (i.e., more is expected of the laity) than that found in the *Corrector* of Burchard of Worms, which leads the penitent through the chief articles of faith in the manner of a catechism.<sup>83</sup> But it is not just a matter of parroting a form of words, as Bartholomew of Exeter explains in his *Penitential*: 'It is also necessary that the faith be sincere and firm. Sincere, in that it has no admixture of heretical depravity; firm, in that in the case of necessity every faithful person be prepared to give their life to confess and defend it.'<sup>84</sup> This sounds a bit like a counsel of perfection, especially the second part of the injunction. It is also less than clear on the question of 'understanding'.

The confirmation/assertion of the creed could also be used in cases more directly concerned with heresy. One such was the Council of Soissons in 1121 where Abelard, after being forced to consign his book *Theologia 'Summi boni'* to the flames, was further humiliated by being forced to read aloud the Athenasian Creed. This was a double blow in that it was suggested that he might not be able

<sup>82</sup> 'Quicumque igitur Deo et sacerdoti suam optulerit penitentiam, primum de fide catholica diligenter inquiratur, ut uel minus credens instruatur et confirmetur, uel si catholice credit, id solemnibus uerbis simboli memoriter ore confiteatur': Bartholomew of Exeter, *Penitential*, p. 175.

<sup>83</sup> *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, ed. by John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 321–45.

<sup>84</sup> 'Oportet etiam ut eadem fides sincera sit et firma. Sincera ut nichil habeat heretice prauitatis admixtum, firma ut in necessitatis articulo pro ipsius confessione et defensione paratus sit quisque fidelis animam ponere': Bartholomew of Exeter, *Penitential*, p. 176.

to recite something that every schoolboy knew, as he wrote with some allowable exaggeration in his autobiographical *Historia calamitatum*, and second, that he was not allowed to demonstrate his own understanding of the faith, but had to stick to the prescribed form of words.<sup>85</sup> An interesting counter to Abelard's claim that this creed was almost universally known comes from a story told by Peter the Venerable. It concerns a priest who had become a monk at Saint-Jean-d'Angély and was heard to declaim the *quicumque vult* on his deathbed, though 'idiota et imperitus litterarum' thus alerting the monks to some miraculous intervention.<sup>86</sup>

### *Problem of Varying Levels of Understanding*

This leads to the vexed question of the level of understanding of the professions of faith made by those affirming in words (i.e., reciting by heart) some version of the creed.<sup>87</sup> It was all very well for people to be required to 'profess' the faith by recitation of the creed, but what level of understanding of the contents was required? The answer seems to be that it differed according to circumstances, although we may discern a gradual increase in what was generally required over the centuries.

There was a consensus by this time that some classes of believer (sometimes referred to as the *simplices* and presumably including most of the laity) were permitted a more limited understanding than the clergy. Given the fact that due to the vagaries of translation to Latin from the original languages and the sheer opacity of some of the theological concepts employed — the Trinity for one — what the creed contained was to some extent beyond everyday logic or comprehension, this concession was only to be expected. Thus Hugh of St Victor

<sup>85</sup> 'Cum autem ego ad profitendam et exponendam fidem meam assurgerem, ut quod sentiebam verbis propriis exprimerem, adversarii dixerunt non aliud mihi necessarium esse nisi ut symbolum Athanasii recitarem, quod quisvis puer eque facere posset. Ac nec ex ignorantia pretenderem excusationem, quasi qui verba illa in usu non haberem, scripturam ad legendum afferri fecerunt. Legi inter suspiria, singultus et lacrimas, prout potui': Peter Abelard, *Historia calamitatum*, ed. by Jacques Monfrin, Bibliothèque des textes philosophiques (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1959), pp. 88–89.

<sup>86</sup> Peter the Venerable, *De miraculis libri duo*, ed. by Dyonisia Bouthillier, CCCM, 83 (1988), bk I, chap. 4, p. 14.

<sup>87</sup> See Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'Du bon usage du "Credo"', in *Faire Croire* (Rome: École française de Rome, 1981), pp. 337–61, who suggests that the creed and paternoster were employed more like talismans than recited with understanding. See especially pp. 352–53.

wrote in *De sacramentis*: 'Such are the simple in holy Church who believe in those who believe and understand more perfectly, who are none the less saved in their simplicity, nor are they cut off from their merit although they do not to attain to their understanding.'<sup>88</sup>

In a similar, though more convoluted, way Peter Lombard, in his *Sentences* explains:

Just as there are some of less ability in the Church, who are not able to set forth and attest to the articles of the creed, yet they believe all that is contained in the creed: for they believe what they do not know, having faith wrapped in mystery. Thus the less capable [...] inhere by believing in the greater, to whom they have committed their faith, as it were.<sup>89</sup>

It might be noted here that the idea of believing what one could not understand was not an idea that found much favour with Abelard. Thus he relates in *Historia calamitatum* how his students kept insisting (though the thought seems to be very much Abelard's own) that 'a stream of words is useless if reason does not follow it, nor can anything be believed unless it is first understood and that it is ridiculous for anyone to proclaim to others what neither he nor those he is teaching can grasp by their intelligence'.<sup>90</sup> Of course, students of theology might well be expected to require a deeper knowledge of the faith than others.

For the general populace, and at a somewhat later date, we can see what was required by Thomas of Chobham († c. 1234), whose penitential *Summa* (c. 1217) obviously fulfilled a need, surviving as it does in 160 manuscript copies. In his work on preaching (*Summa de arte praedicandi*, c. 1228), Thomas also refers to the problem at several points, one being in relation to the knowledge of the faith. He seems to say that laypeople require at least an understanding of the articles attested to by their godparents at baptism. The godparents are, in turn, meant to have the knowledge to instruct their godchild in the creed and paternoster

<sup>88</sup> 'Tales sunt simplices in sancta Ecclesia qui perfectioribus credentibus et cognoscentibus credunt, qui nimirum in sua simplicitate salvantur, nec ab illorum merito alieni sunt, quamvis ad cognitionem illorum non pertingunt': *De sacramentis*, PL, CLXXVI, col. 331.

<sup>89</sup> 'Sicut et in Ecclesia aliqui minus capaces sunt, qui articulos Symboli distinguere et assignare non valent, omnia tamen credunt quae in Symbolo continentur: credunt enim quae ignorant, habentes fidem velatam in mysterio; ita et tunc minus capaces [...] maioribus credendo inhaerebant, quibus fidem suam quasi committebant': Lombard, *Sententiae*, bk III, dist. 25, chap. 2 (II, 155). There seems to be a play on the double sense of 'trust' and 'belief' here.

<sup>90</sup> '[...] dicentes quidem uerborum superfluum esse prolationem quam intelligentia non sequeretur, nec credi posse aliquid nisi primitus intellectum, et ridiculosum esse aliquem aliis predicare quod nec ipse nec illi quos doceret intellectu capere possent': Abelard, *Historia calamitatum*, p. 82.

as well.<sup>91</sup> Ideally this would create a kind of chain reaction so that the problem that no one will be saved unless ‘he is able to respond particularly, explicitly [*nominatum*] concerning all the articles which are contained in the creed and [...] believes them explicitly in some manner’ could be circumvented.<sup>92</sup> In this case the level of comprehension is left a bit vague. To this end, those having cure of souls should ask all penitents presenting for confession (everyone after 1215) whether they know the articles of faith and whether they know the creed. He suggests that they should not be admitted to confession unless they promise to learn the creed to the best of their ability and soon (‘*cum festinatione*’).

Then Thomas comes to the question of those who are ‘simple and not capable of (religious) understanding’ (*ita simplex quod non est capax doctrine*). They are to be saved by the faith of the Church, if they consent in mind to the faith of the Church.<sup>93</sup> Luckily, the faith of the Church is sufficiently proclaimed in the liturgical usages of the three separate creeds.<sup>94</sup> He thus concludes, somewhat tentatively, that the terrible last verse of the ‘greater creed’, that is, the Athanasian Creed — ‘This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully and firmly, he cannot be saved’<sup>95</sup> — does not apply to those who cannot understand (or possibly are simply ignorant of) the entire creed so long as the firm and fixed belief in its articles is transformed into a firm and fixed intention to adhere to the faith of the Church (as comprehensibly covered in the three creeds).<sup>96</sup>

<sup>91</sup> ‘Vnde, precipitur patrinis quod ipsi instruant filiolos suos ut ipsi sciant *Credo et Pater Noster*’: Thomas of Chobham, *Summa de arte praedicandi*, ed. by Franco Morenzoni, CCCM, 82 (1988), chap. 6, p. 171.

<sup>92</sup> ‘[S]ciat respondere nominatim de omnibus articulis qui continentur in symbolo, et nisi credat eos aliquo modo explicite’: Thomas of Chobham, *Summa*, chap. 6, p. 171.

<sup>93</sup> ‘[C]redimus quod saluatur in fide ecclesie, dummodo consentiat animo religioni et fidei quam obseruat ecclesia’: Thomas of Chobham, *Summa*, chap. 6, p. 171.

<sup>94</sup> ‘Ideo autem in prima et in completorio dicit ecclesia symbolum, scilicet in prima symbolum Athanasii canit, scilicet *Quicumque uult*, ad completorium symbolum apostolorum, scilicet *Credo in Deum patrem*, et in diebus festiuis symbolum Nicene sinodi, scilicet *Credo in unum Deum patrem*, et per hoc comprehenduntur simplices in fide ecclesie, et quasi per hoc protestatur ecclesia quod omnes simplices qui in ecclesia sunt huic fidei innituntur, quasi diceret ecclesia: ego protestor et confiteor pro circumstantibus et parochianis meis, quod hec est fides eorum quam ego pronuntio’: Thomas of Chobham, *Summa*, chap. 6, p. 171.

<sup>95</sup> ‘[H]ec est fides catholica quam nisi quisque fideliter et firmiter credit homo qui ex toto firmiterque crediderit saluus esse non poterit’: Thomas of Chobham, *Summa*, chap. 6, p. 172.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Quomodo fideliter et firmiter credit homo qui ex toto articulos ignorat nisi forte dicatur quod ideo firmiter credit quia firmum et fixum propositum habet in animo quod ipse adheret et adherebit inseparabiliter fidei ecclesie?’: Thomas of Chobham, *Summa*, chap. 6, p. 172.

### *Belief and Understanding*

The different levels of understanding required by the 'simple' and those 'more perfect in faith and understanding' open the door to further questions of epistemology. What is the difference, for example, between belief and knowledge, or faith and knowledge?<sup>97</sup> There is also a confusion here between knowing something as in understanding a proposition and knowing something as being thoroughly acquainted with it. In the latter sense knowledge of God would only be possible after the general resurrection when the blessed would enjoy the divine presence and see him face to face.

Thus Hugh of St Victor, in *Sententiae de diuinitate*, remarks that God's revelations are not complete because a place for *infidelitas* is required, otherwise free will would be excluded:

He did not wish to be entirely revealed, in order that faith would have merit and faithlessness a place. For if everything were entirely clear faith could not be exercised, since faith is in things not apparent and does not have merit when human reason proves it by experience. If there were no faith, there would be no merit, if no merit, no reward.<sup>98</sup>

This obviously has repercussions for free will, as he explains: 'If there were no place for faithlessness there would be no place for free will because then no one could not believe and thus by necessity everyone would believe and free will would perish.'<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, if everything were totally hidden there would be no place for faith or hope, either:

For how could anyone believe what he was totally ignorant of. This would conveniently excuse faithlessness, concerning which the Apostle accused men: Because, when they knew

<sup>97</sup> Compare John of Salisbury's remark in *Policraticus*, bk VII, chap. 2 (II, 96): 'Licet enim fides ad scientiae brauium non perueniat, dum quasi per speculum ueritatem absentium contuetur, habet tamen certitudinem caligine ambiguitatis exclusa' (Although faith does not reach the pinnacle of knowledge while it beholds absent truth as in a mirror, yet it possesses certainty, the fog of doubt having been excluded).

<sup>98</sup> 'Noluit esse omnino manifestus, ut et fides haberet meritum et infidelitas haberet locum. Si enim omnino esset manifestus, non posset fides exerceri, cum fides tamen non apparentium sit et non habeat meritum cum ei humana ratio prebet experimentum. Si autem fides non esset, meritum non esset; et si meritum non esset, premium non esset': Hugh of St Victor, *Sententiae de diuinitate*, ed. by A. M. Piazzoni, *Studi Medievali*, 23 (1982), 861–955 (p. 948).

<sup>99</sup> 'Si non esset locus infidelitati, non esset locus libero arbitrio, quia tunc nullus posset non credere et ita necessario quisque crederet; periret ergo liberum arbitrium': Hugh of St Victor, *Sententiae de diuinitate*, p. 948.



God, they did not glorify him as God. Whence it is clear that if they did not know entirely nor could they know, they were absolutely excusable.<sup>100</sup>

Hugh goes on to explain in what manner God may be (partially) known.<sup>101</sup> God is revealed according to nature by reason and by creation; according to grace, through inspiration and teaching/doctrine. Hugh sees reason as a sort of 'eye of the mind' that contemplates the truth which is demonstrated externally in created things.<sup>102</sup> But reason is clouded through sin (*per peccatum*) so it is supplemented by interior 'inspiration' (*aspiratio*), which Hugh claims is the ultimate witness since afterwards no one doubts ('ultimus testis quia postea nemo dubitat'). Thus, Hugh claims that God exists and he is one (*unum*); 'the rational mind comprehends through itself but it does not comprehend it so perfectly as it afterwards does with the help of inspiration.'<sup>103</sup> Baldwin of Forde has a more combative notion of the relation between reason and faith. Indeed he sees them as fundamentally in opposition. 'Above all faith and human reason are locked in battle. They do this so that one might gouge out the other's eye, nor is there an end to the combat until one of them is blinded.'<sup>104</sup> (The assumption here is that the eye of reason is to be sacrificed to the eye of faith rather than vice versa.)

In the battle between faith and reason we have Abelard's notion that one cannot claim to believe what one does not understand running up against the idea (best exemplified by St Anselm) that we believe in order to understand.<sup>105</sup> So what was Abelard's attitude to faith and understanding? Abelard thought he was called upon to use his God-given talent in dialectic to explicate the faith. He also drew

<sup>100</sup> 'Qualiter enim crederet aliquis quod omnino nesciret? Item posset conuenienter excusari infidelitas; de hoc enim apostolus homines accusat: "Quia, cum cognouissent Deum, non sicut Deum glorificauerunt." Vnde patet quia si omnino non cognouissent nec possent cognoscere, prorsus essent excusabiles': Hugh of St Victor, *Sententiae de diuinitate*, pp. 948–49.

<sup>101</sup> 'Voluit igitur Deus nec omnino sciri nec omnino nesciri, sed partim esse occultus, partim manifestus': Hugh of St Victor, *Sententiae de diuinitate*, p. 949.

<sup>102</sup> 'Interius enim ratio quasi quidam mentis oculus ueritatem contemplabatur que foris per creaturam demonstrabatur': Hugh of St Victor, *Sententiae de diuinitate*, p. 949.

<sup>103</sup> '[R]ationalis mens per se deprehendit, sed non tam perfecte comprehendit ut postea fecit adiuta aspiratione': Hugh of St Victor, *Sententiae de diuinitate*, p. 949.

<sup>104</sup> 'In primis fides et humana ratio compugnant, et hoc agitur inter eas ut altera alteri oculum eruat; nec est finis huius pugne citra alterius excecationem': Baldwin of Forde, *Opera*, Sermo 4, chap. 21, p. 72.

<sup>105</sup> This contrast, which has been used to animate the entire debate between faith and understanding over the years is, of course, not as straightforward as it seems.



on the classical etymology of philosophy as love of knowledge and concluded that the only knowledge worth having had to do with divinity. As he remarks at the beginning of the *Theologia 'scholarium'*, referring to his students: 'They thought I was the one to resolve these controversies, whom they said, as if from my very cradle was engaged in philosophical studies and especially dialectic. And they unanimously begged me not to put off multiplying the talent committed to me by the Lord.'<sup>106</sup>

What were the kinds of problem that Abelard was to explicate through dialectic? It is notable that he sees his task in terms of 'problem solving' rather than simple explanation. Perhaps most difficult was the nature of the Trinity since both the second and third books of the *Theologia 'scholarium'* are devoted to it. Abelard seems not to have got around to treating the sacraments which were intended to form the third part of his *summa*, as also being necessary for salvation.

For an indication of Abelard's approach we may consider the following: 'The Catholic faith consists partly in the nature of the divinity, partly in the divine *beneficia* and somewhat in the most righteous dispensations or ordinations of God which are diligently expressed for us in the creeds of the Apostles or the Holy Fathers.'<sup>107</sup>

Yet when talking about matters of faith, he makes the rather modest claim that he does not have the (whole) truth but only some approximation to it (as befits a mere mortal). Yet this should not be taken as an admission of uncertainty or doubt. It is more like the modest claims of the Academicians, as reported by John of Salisbury. Thus Abelard writes:

Concerning this we do not claim to be teaching the truth, to which we believe neither we nor any mortal can be adequate, but at least I should like to propose something approaching it and allied to human reason nor contrary to holy faith, against those who glory in attacking faith with human reason.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> 'Ad has itaque dissoluendas controuersias cum me sufficere arbitrentur, quem quasi ab ipsis cunabulis in philosopie studiis ac precipue dialectice [...] atque experimento, ut aiunt, didicerint, unanimiter postulant ne talentum michi a domino commissum multiplicare differam': Abelard, *Theologia 'scholarium'*, preface, pp. 313–14.

<sup>107</sup> 'Fides [i.e., the content of the faith] autem catholica partim circa ipsam diuinitatis naturam, partim circa divina beneficia et quascumque dei rectissimas dispensationes uel ordinationes consistit, quae nobis diligenter apostolorum uel sanctorum patrum symbolis expressa sunt': Abelard, *Theologia 'scholarium'*, bk 1, chap. 17, p. 326.

<sup>108</sup> 'De quo quidem nos docere ueritatem non promittimus, ad quam neque nos neque mortalium aliquem sufficere credimus, sed saltem aliquid uerisimile atque humane rationi uicinum nec sacre fidei contrarium proponere libet aduersus eos qui humanis rationibus fidem se

By this he did not mean to deny that what he said was true in some sense, while leaving 'the Truth' to be fully comprehended in the life to come. In Abelard's view, that did not mean that you should not start trying to understand here and now.

Moreover, recognition of the need for such knowledge was not confined to those working in the heady atmosphere of the burgeoning schools. The remarks of the Benedictine Ralph of Fly, writing in the 1150s, about his monks not really understanding their faith and thus being at a disadvantage in discussions vis-à-vis the Jews shows that more traditional sites of study and education shared in this endeavour.<sup>109</sup>

### Conclusion

It is not surprising that twelfth-century writers seem not to have discussed the nature of doubt directly, since even today it is a concept more readily used than analysed.<sup>110</sup> However, what some of them took to be the nature of doubt can be inferred from their discussions of grammar, psychology, and epistemology, especially that of belief or faith. The relation of faith to doubt is recognized, particularly by Hugh of St Victor and Baldwin of Forde, as being complex rather than simply oppositional. The question of what kinds of things might be doubted within the context of faith, and indeed the relation between faith and the understanding of the content of such beliefs, then arises. There was a general recognition that at least some people required a deeper understanding of the tenets of the faith (or at least some aspects of them). We shall see in the next chapter how such ends were furthered by the intellectual programme of the twelfth century and, in particular, what role doubt could be said to have had in this.

impugnare gloriantur, nec nisi humanas curant rationes quas nouerunt, multos que facile assentatores inueniunt, cum fere omnes animales sint homines ac paucissimi spirituales': Abelard, *Theologia 'scholarium'*, bk II, chap. 18, p. 414.

<sup>109</sup> See Beryl Smalley, 'Ralph of Flaix on Leviticus', in *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning from Abelard to Wyclif* (London: Hambledon, 1981), pp. 49–96 (p. 67).

<sup>110</sup> Compare the entry for *certainty* in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed. by Robert Audi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), which includes the remark: 'In general philosophers have not found this an interesting property to explore.' There is no entry for *doubt*.

## THE BENEFITS OF DOUBT

In the previous chapter we tried to discover what twelfth-century writers and thinkers thought and wrote about the nature of doubt. This chapter will examine the relationship between such doubt and what R. W. Southern has called ‘the intellectual programme’ of the twelfth century.<sup>1</sup> There are at least two related elements to consider: a) the role of individual or subjective doubt as a general condition or cause of intellectual activity, and b) the role of doubt as a method of investigation.

### *Doubt and the Medieval Intellectual Programme*

What was ‘the intellectual programme’ of the twelfth century, and how was it related to the idea of continuous Christian revelation?<sup>2</sup> It should be remembered that according to the Christian view, the pursuit of understanding, whether of the natural world or of spiritual matters up to and including the very nature of God was in fact an attempt to regain the knowledge lost to mankind as a result of the Fall. Hildegard’s elegiac description of Adam’s lost musical skills is just one expression of the idea:<sup>3</sup> ‘But Adam lost the voice of the Living Spirit through

<sup>1</sup> See the preface to Volume I of Southern, *Scholastic*. Several aspects of my account of the intellectual life of the twelfth century depend on the insights presented in this magisterial work.

<sup>2</sup> Concerning the ongoing revelation of the Christian faith see Peter Brown’s, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: Faber, 1967), especially p. 261. St Augustine seemed to think that God had withheld some things so that men could exercise their wits in finding them out.

<sup>3</sup> See *Epistolarium*, Ep. 23, pp. 61–66, to the clergy of Mainz protesting the interdict placed on her monastery which, among other things, curtailed the singing of Mass. See also Sabina Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen: A Visionary Life* (London: Routledge, 1998), chap. 9.

disobedience. For while he was still innocent, before his transgression, his voice was as one with the voices of angelic praise.<sup>4</sup> After the Fall he only had dim recollections of his former state, being ‘deservedly wrapped in the darkness of inward ignorance because of his iniquity’.<sup>5</sup> But the position is not entirely hopeless, since God does not want this situation to continue indefinitely and has allowed some choice souls, notably ‘the holy prophets’, to be ‘infused with the light of truth’. Others, taking their lead from the prophets, have also set their hand to making musical instruments and composing hymns.<sup>6</sup>

The same general process was thought to hold for other branches of knowledge. There were some who were divinely inspired, notably the authors of the sacred Scriptures, and others who used their more limited human wisdom, presumably the Fathers of the Church, in this remedial activity.<sup>7</sup> There was some question as to how much they were directly inspired. Thus Hugh of St Victor in Book I of his *De sacramentis*, after explaining that the Divine Scriptures consist of the Old and New Testaments and that each division consists of three parts, says that the New Testament ‘contains the Gospels, the Apostles, and the Fathers. Thus there are four Gospels and four books of the Apostles (Acts, Pauline Epistles, Canonical epistles and Apocalypse)’ (pt I, chap. 7). He then adds, somewhat confusingly, ‘The writings of the Fathers are not reckoned in the body of the text, since they add nothing, but expand on what is contained in the above by explaining and treating it more broadly and clearly.’<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> ‘[U]ocem [...] quam Adam per inobedientiam perdidit, qui ante transgressionem, adhuc innocens, non minimam societatem cum angelicarum laudum uocibus habebat’: *Epistolarium*, Ep. 23, p. 63.

<sup>5</sup> ‘[T]enebris interioris ignorantie ex merito iniquitatis sue inuolutus est’: *Epistolarium*, Ep. 23, p. 63.

<sup>6</sup> ‘[I]dem sancti prophete, eodem spiritu quem acceperant edocti, non solum psalmos et cantica [...] sed et instrumenta musice artis diuersa [...] composuerunt’: *Epistolarium*, Ep. 23, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> But see Chapter 4, n. 74, to which we may add the picture of Gregory the Great and the dove in the Sacramentary Fragment from Metz (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 1141, fol. 3<sup>v</sup>) reproduced in Florentine Mütherich and Joachim E. Gaehde, *Carolingian Painting* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1977), p. 96. See also John of Salisbury’s letter to Count Henry of Champagne (1152–81) on the canon of Scripture, *Letters of John of Salisbury*, Ep. 209, pp. 314–38, where the writings of the Fathers are not included among the holy books. He takes Jerome (‘catholicae ecclesiae doctorem’) as his authority on what should be included.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Scriptura Patrum in corpore textus non computantur, quia non aliud adjiciunt, sed id ipsum quod in supradictis continetur explanando et latius manifestiusque tractando extendunt’: Hugh of St Victor, *De sacramentis*, PL, CLXXVI, col. 186.

As well as the general and ongoing recovery of Adam's lost knowledge there was another, more concrete sense in which the wisdom of the past was being regained. This is not the place to go into the fascinating story of the transmission of classical (Greek and Latin) writings to the present day. However, it should be noted that it was in the twelfth century that the complete logical works of Aristotle (*The Organon*) first became available to the Latin West.<sup>9</sup>

We could say, then, following Southern, that whereas the programme of the earlier Middle Ages was one of recovering the wisdom or learning of the past, that of the long twelfth century was to classify, clarify, and arrange it in a form suitable for transmitting to subsequent generations — increasingly by means of public teaching in the new centres of learning, the urban schools.<sup>10</sup>

### *Theology/Sacred Studies*

It hardly needs to be said that Christianity was (and is) a religion of the book. But until about the twelfth century, and for a large proportion of the European population till very much later, medieval society was an oral culture.<sup>11</sup> So from about the second century AD, by which date the Gospels had been written down, elite Christian culture became increasingly one of the written word operating within a largely oral society with which it had to make accommodations. Thus in the twelfth century, although the teaching method of the schools was oral, it was firmly based on the *lectio* of a pre-existing written text.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, the progress of knowledge could be seen to depend upon obtaining the right books, correcting their errors, understanding their message, and passing on the teaching contained in them. While this applied to all subjects, it was especially true of the highest study, theology, to which all the others were seen in some sense as ancillary.<sup>13</sup> The

<sup>9</sup> For an introduction to the literature on this topic see Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), and the volume inspired by the fiftieth anniversary of this classic, *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> On this see especially Southern, *Scholastic*, I, pt 1.

<sup>11</sup> See for example Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> This was true not only in the case of theology/sacred page whose text was the Bible, and later commentators on it, but also for secular subjects such as grammar and arithmetic.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon de studio legendi*, ed. by Charles H. Buttner (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1939), *passim*, and the passage in *De sacramentis*

core of the whole enterprise was, of course, the Bible, and the greater part of scholarly effort to this time had been centred on this collection of texts as transformed and transmitted through the intervening centuries. This involved both establishing the canonical texts and commenting on them in various explicatory ways. The body of such commentary kept growing, with successive generations hoping to add something to what went before or at least to arrange the material in a more usable form for those whose access to the growing corpus might be limited.<sup>14</sup> Thus Bede († 735), in his preface to *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, in answer to brother Nothelm who has sent various questions to him for elucidation:

Although I know there are things much more obscure in the book than those which you have judged should be investigated by me, I also know that it very often happens that one who has perhaps already well understood some more obscure things (because, for example, he has found them sufficiently explained in the treatises of great writers) remains uncertain and doubtful of the sense in various simpler matters which they who treated more profound things perhaps did not think worthy of investigation.

He sees himself, in sending his supplementary explanations, as ‘following the footsteps of the Fathers’.<sup>15</sup>

One result of this increased activity, coupled with increasing wealth allowing for the expansion in library holdings, was a need to reconcile various conflicting accounts or interpretations. Obviously if you only have one commentary on a text in your library you will not come across the discrepancies you might find if you had ten.<sup>16</sup>

headed: ‘How all arts are subservient to divine wisdom’: ‘Therefore it is clear that all the natural arts serve divine knowledge, and that the lower wisdom, rightly ordered, leads to the higher’ (Quomodo omnes artes subserviunt divinae sapientiae. Ex quo constat quod omnes artes naturales divinae scientiae famulantur, et inferior sapientia recte ordinata ad superiorem conducit): PL, CLXXVI, col.185. This idea goes back, as does so much else in medieval thought, to St Augustine. See *De doctrina Christiana*, ed. by Jacques Martin, CCSL, 32 (1962).

<sup>14</sup> It was not a matter of steady and incremental progress, however, as the near eclipse of learning during the sixth to eighth centuries as a result of the various barbarian invasions and its recovery in what has been called with some reason the ‘Carolingian Renaissance’ shows.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Quamuis ipse noueram plurima in eodem libro multo obscuriora quam ea esse quae a me quaerenda iudicasti sed et hoc non ignorabam saepius fieri solere ut is qui obscuriora forte non nulla iam bene intellexerat quia uidelicet haec in tractatibus magnorum auctorum sufficienter explanata reppererat ipse adhuc in quibusdam facilioribus sensu incertus perseueret ac dubius quae illi fortasse qui profundiora tractabant quaesito digna non ducebant’; ‘[...] uestigia patrum sequens’: Bede, *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, ed. by David Hurst, CCSL, 119 (1962), pp. 293–322 (p. 293).

<sup>16</sup> On libraries, especially in England, see Rodney M. Thomson, *England and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, CS620 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998).

Moreover, there was also progress in the studies which had long been recognized, to a greater or lesser extent, as necessary for a proper understanding of the Bible. The seven liberal arts, the basis of classical educational practice, which had been considered, albeit somewhat grudgingly, from patristic times as useful (and in the case of *grammar* as a necessary prerequisite) for any approach to eventual study of the *sacra pagina* were also undergoing change and development, especially with the recovery/rediscovery of texts of Aristotelian philosophy mentioned above.<sup>17</sup> Cross-fertilization among the various disciplines which were now becoming increasingly differentiated, was possible due to advances in understanding — first of the *logica vetera* and later, with the completion of translations of Aristotle's *Organon*, the new logic (*logica nova*). Such studies at least suggested new ways of solving old problems. Whether they also suggested new questions will be examined later.<sup>18</sup>

### *Sites of Learning*

How much of this new attitude towards sacred and secular learning was due to a diversification in the institutional settings where such studies were pursued? There have been many attempts to link what has been seen as the traditional meditative, commentary-style approach to knowledge with the *lectio divina* practised in monastic institutions. In contrast to this slow building-up of understanding over a monastic lifetime we see the rapid development of old and new disciplines (including theology) being shaped by the need of the schools to pass on information to students within a limited, though compared to modern expectations, quite leisurely, period of time as an integrated, comprehensive course of study.<sup>19</sup> The

<sup>17</sup> For example, logic, dialectic, and grammar were all flourishing, although largely in response to new examinations of already existing texts. See G. R. Evans, *Old Arts and New Theology: The Beginnings of Theology as an Academic Discipline* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

<sup>18</sup> The *logica vetera* included Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Aristotle's *Categoriae* and *De interpretatione*, and Boethius's translations, commentaries, and treatises on logic. The *logica nova* which began to appear in the Schools around the middle of the twelfth century added new translations of Aristotle's *Analytica priora* and *Analytica posteriora*, the *Topica*, and *Sophistici elenchi*.

<sup>19</sup> For the classical account of this difference see Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study in Monastic Culture*, trans. by Catherine Misrahi (London: SPCK, 1978) (originally published in French, 1957); Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964); Evans, *Old Arts*; Southern, *Scholastic*, and references contained therein.



purposes to which such study would be put was also different, since many of the students of the schools were looking towards careers in ecclesiastical or secular administration, even if quite a few became monks sooner or later.<sup>20</sup>

However, such differences (the monastic/scholastic divide is a shorthand way of summing them up) were not as clear-cut as has often been assumed.<sup>21</sup> For instance, the pedagogy of the schools can be seen as a development of monastic practice. Teaching in the schools was also based on the well-established method of reading and commenting on written texts. Furthermore the monastic evening *collatio*,<sup>22</sup> where the abbot would answer the monks' questions, bears some resemblance to the question-and-answer sessions which were beginning to be held every afternoon in the schools to clear up puzzles arising from the morning's lectures on the set text. Such lecturing, in turn, was increasingly dependent on a standard set of explanations (the *glossa ordinaria*) and as time went on scholars began to comment on the glosses as well.<sup>23</sup> Questions which arose from such interpretations, and increasingly, from trying to apply Christian teachings to changing social and economic situations, began to be allotted a special time for investigation outside the morning lectures.<sup>24</sup> The growing detachment of such questions from the original text and their arrangement into collections of *sentences* and later *summae* can be seen as a natural development of the process.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Among them Abelard, Baldwin of Forde, and Everard of Ypres.

<sup>21</sup> Leclercq himself, in *Renaissance and Renewal*, pp. 68–87, refined his earlier conception by identifying several 'monastic theologies'. The original differentiation arose from his realization that something more nuanced was needed than *Vorscholastic* to characterize the thought of this period. See Leclercq's introduction to *Love of Learning*.

<sup>22</sup> How much of this is patterned on Cassian's *Conlationes*, interestingly, itself in dialogue form? The operative word here for each subject discussed is *interrogatio*, which introduces a range of interrogatives such as *quemadmodum*, *cur*, *unde*, *qualiter* or sometimes the simple *de*.

<sup>23</sup> For the classic account of the development of the *glossa ordinaria* see Smalley, *The Study of the Bible*.

<sup>24</sup> On this see especially John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and his Circle*, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

<sup>25</sup> Much of the early work on this process was undertaken in the context of explaining the development of scholasticism, hence the category of 'Pre-scholasticism'. See for example, Martin Grabmann, *Geschichte der scholastischen Methode, Bd II: Die scholastische Methode im 12. und beginnenden 13. Jahrhundert* (1911; repr. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1998); Artur Michael Landgraf, *Einführung in die Geschichte der theologischen Literatur der Frühscholastik* (Regensburg: Gregorius Verlag, 1948). Still useful as a general introduction is G. Paré, A. Brunet, P. Tremblay, *La Renaissance du XII<sup>e</sup> Siècle: Les Écoles et L'Enseignement* (Ottawa: Institut d'études médiévales,



But perhaps more important for the traditional story was the supposedly anti-theoretical mind-set attributed to monks and schoolmen — the one emphasizing faith and the other reason. In this somewhat oversimplified picture, the monks were content to rely on faith and to hope their understanding would be illuminated by the Holy Spirit if not in this life, then in the life to come. The schoolmen, by contrast, wished to apply their own natural, though God-given, reason to clarifying and understanding religious concepts here and now. This is, of course, putting the contrast too starkly. Clarembald of Arras justified writing his treatise on Boethius's *De Trinitate* by reference to the importunities of some monks (possibly from St Victor at Laon) who had found Gilbert of Poitiers's *Glosses* on the text too difficult!<sup>26</sup> Yet it remains true that the question of where reason might properly be applied in matters of faith was potentially divisive in the twelfth century and one which often seems to have been decided along institutional lines.<sup>27</sup>

### *Reason and Dialectic*

All those who thought about it at all allowed that some use of reason was called for, since man was made in the image of God. Baldwin of Forde puts it in a striking manner when he writes, in his Tractate 6 (Sermo 18):

The keenness of human genius and the human senses, together with the fine discrimination of our words, are also like a two-edged sword of most subtle discernment, which divides by discriminating between the true and the false, the good and the bad, the honest and the dishonest, and all other opposites subject to its cunning and skillful investigations. From this there derives the whole of worldly philosophy and human wisdom.<sup>28</sup>

1933). A host of more specialized monographs could also be mentioned, such as Marcia Colish's *Peter Lombard*, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1994). See also the extensive bibliography in Mariken Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages*, Études sur le vocabulaire intellectuel du moyen âge, 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

<sup>26</sup> See Nikolaus Häring, *The Life and Works of Clarembald of Arras* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1965), p. 18. His commentary was dedicated to Odo of Ourscamp (later Bishop of Tusculum), who seems to be the Odo of Soissons who also wrote to Hildegard with a theological question (see pp. 64–65). Odo himself is also credited with a place in development of *quaestiones*.

<sup>27</sup> Thus the two academic causes célèbres of the twelfth century, the trials of Abelard and Gilbert of Poitiers for heretical teachings, were instigated by the Cistercian abbot Bernard of Clairvaux.

<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, the medium through which this message is delivered is typically monastic since it occurs in a sermon, commenting on a biblical text.

There is a catch, however, as Baldwin goes on to explain, in that

the latter [...] being ignorant of the limits of what is possible, has dared to attempt an examination of the things above it, things to which it could never attain, relying on its own abilities. It has exercised itself with difficult and deep investigations into the nature of God, the origin of the world, the condition of the soul, and the quality of righteousness and blessedness, and thereby has been able neither to find the way of truth nor attain to the wisdom of God which is hidden in mystery.<sup>29</sup>

But the use of human reason, wherever one were to draw the line, did not just require the application of native wit to problems.<sup>30</sup> Hugh of St Victor, in *Didascalicon*, Book I, Chapter 11, points out that

before *grammar*, people both wrote and spoke; before *dialectic* they discerned truth from falsity by reasoning and before *rhetoric* [here understood as the art of persuasion] they were concerned with civil law [*iura ciuilia*].<sup>31</sup> But when the arts came along, although they took their origin from such naive usage, they were better than simple practice.

So it was accepted that the pursuit of knowledge could be advanced by various modes of study appropriate to the subject matter. Accordingly, the exercise of human reason could be enhanced by using the methods discovered, or, rather, recovered from a study of earlier philosophy. A new concentration on the *ars*

<sup>29</sup> 'Preterea acies humani ingenii et humani sensus, sermonisque subtilitas, tanquam gladius anceps subtilissime, quasi per discretionem diuidit inter uerum et falsum, inter bonum et malum, honestum et inhonestum, ceteraque contraria ingeniose et artificiose inquisitioni obnoxia. 14. Hinc omnis mundana philosophia, humanaque sapientia manauit, que modum sue possibilitatis ignorans, supra se ausa est attemptare, ad que, in se relisa, nullatenus potuit pertingere. Nam se exercens circa arduas et profundas inquisitiones de natura Dei, de origine mundi, de statu anime, de iusticie et beatitudinis qualitate, uiam ueritatis inuenire: et ad sapientiam Dei in mysterio absconditam non ualuit peruenire': Baldwin of Forde, *Opera*, Sermo 18, chaps 13–14, p. 288.

<sup>30</sup> Hildegard has something to say on the matter of human *ingenium* — largely that she did not depend upon it for her wide-ranging treatments of divine and secular subjects. Indeed her method was to take a visual (i.e., visionary) text and gloss it (albeit according to a simultaneous translation/commentary from the Living Light.) She also protested that she had not been taught to write 'as philosophers write', thus maintaining her state of pious ignorance. See her letter to Guibert of Gembloux, 'sicut philosophi scribunt scribere in uisione hac non doceor': *Epistolarium*, Ep. 103r, p. 262.

<sup>31</sup> 'priusquam esset grammatica et scribebant et loquebantur homines. priusquam esset dialectica ratiocinando uerum a falso discernabant. priusquam rhetorica, iura ciuilia tractabant [...] priusquam esset musica, caneant (and so on through the seven liberal arts.) He concludes: 'sed uenerunt artes, que licet ab usu pricipium sumpserint, usu tamen meliores sunt': Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon*, pp. 20–21.

*disserendi* (including both dialectic and rhetoric) was one of the most important tools brought to bear on longstanding problems.<sup>32</sup> Such problems concerned not only what we might think of as philosophy, such as the problem of universals, logic of imputation, terminism, speculative grammar, and so on, but also the study of the *sacra pagina* or theology, as it began to be called in this period.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the very oppositions Baldwin presents in the passage quoted above and his reference to the power of discerning truth from falsehood indicate that he, too, is drawing on his own considerable knowledge of the art of dialectic.

### *Questions and 'Quaestiones'*

Hugh of St Victor, when he pointed out the difference between an activity and an art (speaking and grammar, for instance) might also have said that there were questions before there were *quaestiones*. People have always sought to find things out by questioning, the act of asking for information, whether from others or sometimes by questioning themselves. In the Latin of the twelfth century there were several common words in use — both for the thing asked and for the activity of asking. One such was the word *inquisitio* (from verb *inquirere*). It can mean a simple question or a more extended investigation, as can the word *enquiry* in modern English. The unfortunate overtones given the word by its links with the historical *Inquisition* (or more properly *inquisitions*) should be set aside. It seems that even after 1215 when the machinery was put in motion for those enquiries into the orthodoxy of individuals which made the word infamous, an 'inquisition' could maintain its non-sinister and general meaning. In the twelfth century an 'inquisition' could be deemed 'pious', 'stupid' or 'not stupid', 'more diligent' or 'proud and curious'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Hugh of St Victor, *Epitome Dindimi in philosophiam*, in *Opera Propaedeutica*, ed. by Roger Baron (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966): 'Logica autem diuiditur in grammaticam et in rationem disserendi; ratio disserendi continet probabilem, sophisticam, necessariam; probabilis uero habet partes rhetoricam et dialecticam' (p. 200).

<sup>33</sup> Abelard is generally accorded the first usage of the term *theology* for systematic study of the Christian faith. Originally the word had been used for a study of the divine nature (and its Latin equivalent was *divinitas*). See Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary*, pp. 379–81.

<sup>34</sup> *Pia* (Baldwin of Forde, *De sacramento altaris*, preface, p. 74), *uanam ac stultam* (*Epistolarium*, Ep. 117r, p. 290), *non inanis* (*Speculum uirginum*, chap. 9, p. 259), *diligentiori* (Ailred, *De speculo caritatis*, bk III, chap. 35, p. 145), or *superba et curiosa* (Baldwin of Forde, *De sacramento altaris*, bk II, chap. 1, p. 210).

The same was true for the scope of the words *interrogatio*, from the verb *interrogare* which also lacked the negative overtones of modern English 'interrogate'.<sup>35</sup> Thus Cassian's *Collations*, often regarded as some sort of precursor of the scholastic question and answer session, are written as a series of *Interrogationes*. Thus we find 'Interrogatio de cogitationum mobilitate' (Enquiry into the instability of thoughts); 'Interrogatio de libero arbitrio hominis et gratia dei' (Enquiry concerning the free will of man and the grace of God).

But there were two other words that have a rather different history and role in our investigation: *problema* (from the Greek *problema*) and *quaestio*, from the verb *quaerere*.<sup>36</sup> We have met them before in Heloise's *Problemata* and the *Quaestiones* of the monks of Villers. Here we saw how any attempt to read the Bible, the importance of which, as the Word of God and the guide to salvation, could not be overestimated, may provoke requests for information and explanation of various difficult passages. In their replies, Hildegard and Abelard were just the latest practitioners of an activity that had been going on at least since the time of Augustine and had produced a literature of massive erudition over the centuries.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes, indeed, the questioner was just assumed/virtual, or the author might be thought of as asking his or her own questions, or even, perhaps 'interrogating the text'. This is also how commentaries on various specific books of the Bible, and sometimes simply particular problems arising from them, had been produced from patristic times and continued to be produced during the twelfth century.<sup>38</sup> We can get some idea of their nature by seeing what kinds of things were asked in works entitled *quaestiones* before the twelfth century.

For example, Jerome (c. 342–420), in his *Liber quaestionum hebraicarum in Genesim*,<sup>39</sup> often seems to be dealing with questions of textual transmission

<sup>35</sup> Seeking to 'interrogate the text' even sounds like a form of harassment.

<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, this also had the meaning of judicial torture which has not descended to modern English.

<sup>37</sup> See Gustave Bary, 'La Littérature patristique des *Quaestiones et responsiones* sur l'Écriture Sainte', in *Revue Biblique*, 41 (1932), 210–36, 341–69, 515–37; 42 (1933), 14–30, 211–29, 328–52, and on the development of biblical exegesis in general, Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, trans. by Marc Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski, 2 vols (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998–2000).

<sup>38</sup> See Nikolaus M. Häring, 'Commentary and Hermeneutics', in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. by Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) pp. 173–200.

<sup>39</sup> Referred to by Abelard in *Sic et Non*, qu. 23, p. 163, as '*Hieronymus super genesim, In libro Hebraicarum questionum*'. 'Sed et euangelistae et dominus quoque noster atque saluator nec non

and translation, as where he notes: '[B]ut the evangelists and also our Lord and Saviour and the Apostle Paul pronounce many things as if from the Old Testament which we do not have in our books.' His aim is thus to establish a better text. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) deals with difficulties encountered in the New Testament in various works including *Quaestiones evangeliorum*. He explains at the outset that he will not be commenting on the entire text but picking out and considering questions that have occurred to him while reading it.<sup>40</sup> Thus Book II, Chapter 5, begins: 'It is not entirely stupid to ask: "How could Joseph have two fathers?"',<sup>41</sup> since Matthew says he was engendered by one who was called Jacob, and Luke says his father was called Heli.' Augustine dismisses the most obvious answer, that the father had two names and concludes after some further discussion, 'thus adoption solves this question [...] or some other reason that does not at present appear to us.'<sup>42</sup>

Several centuries later we find in the anonymous eighth-century *Quaestiones euangelii* a set of questions and answers presenting a pithy overview of the Gospels, while *Quaestiones uel glosae in euangelio nomine* attempts a similar introduction on a larger scale. It begins by establishing by means of typology/symbolism why there should be only four evangelists, thus eliminating at a stroke the numerous competing apocryphal Gospels. It then goes on to answer such questions as: 'It may be asked who was the first evangelist to write, where he wrote, what language he wrote in and why he wrote.'<sup>43</sup> On the basis of the authority of 'Eusebius, St Jerome and Blessed Augustine' the answers prove to be Matthew, in Judea, in Hebrew and to inform the Jews. The questions involved here came in various forms and may also be found in a range of other works not specifically described as 'Questions'.

et Paulus apostolus multa quasi de ueteri testamento proferunt, quae in nostris codicibus non habentur': Jerome, *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos*, ed. by Paul de Lagarde, CCL, 72 (1959), p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> 'sed pro arbitrio et tempore consulentis cum quo legebatur, si quid ei uidebatur obscurum': Augustine, *Quaestiones evangeliorum*, ed. by Almut Mutzenbecher, CCL, 44B (1980), pp. 1–118, Prologus, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> 'Non absurde quaestio proponitur. Quomodo potuerit duos patres habere Ioseph?': Augustine, *Quaestiones evangeliorum*, bk II, qu. 5, p. 46.

<sup>42</sup> 'Ergo aut adoptio soluit istam quaestionem [...] aut aliqua alia causa, quae nobis in praesentia non occurrit': Augustine, *Quaestiones evangeliorum*, bk II, qu. 5, p. 47.

<sup>43</sup> For *Quaestiones euangelii* see *Scriptores Hiberniae minores*, ed. by Robert E. McNally, CCL, 108B (1973), pp. 150–51; for *Quaestiones uel glosae* see *ibid.*, pp. 133–49: 'Queritur quis primus euangelista scripsit, aut ubi scripsit, aut qua lingua scripsit, aut pro qua rem scripsit' (p. 140).

It is also apparent that many of these questions recur from time to time in various guises. For example Rupert von Deutz (c. 1075–1129) in his *De sancta trinitate et operibus eius* has chapter headings which include numerous interrogative words, indicating that he is answering questions, either thought up by himself or others, such as: *quid, quomodo, quod, quia, cur, quo sensu, quorum vel qualium*.<sup>44</sup> He also uses *utrum* (whether) as in Book III, Chapter 2, where he asks ‘whether the serpent could be in paradise’ (*utrum serpens in paradiso esse potuerit*). In the section on Deuteronomy (bk 18), he refers to the problem of infant sin as ‘a great and very old question’ (*magna et antiqua quaestio*).

Returning to Heloise’s *Problemata*, we find that Abelard’s answers are similar in kind to those which Hildegard provided to the *quaestiones* of the monks of Villers.<sup>45</sup> Both could be seen as covering a variety of miscellaneous topics, while the form in which the question is cast follows common (rather than dialectical) usage. It can also be quite straightforward, as for example, ‘what does it mean “to pray without ceasing”?’ In general they are queries raised in the process of seeking to understand the meaning of the biblical text, or sometimes the sayings of Jesus as reported in the text; sometimes they call for a reconciliation of different accounts from the Gospels’ historical narrative, for instance of the events surrounding the Resurrection. Heloise’s last question, ‘can it be a sin to do what Christ commanded?’ — which seems somewhat detached from the biblical text — is picked up by Abelard as a justification for a discussion of marriage and the place of sexual activity within it.<sup>46</sup>

The title of the Heloise/Abelard work, *Problemata*, is less common than *Quaestiones* for a collection of this nature. According to Isidore’s *Etymologies*, ‘problemata’ are particular kinds of questions that can be solved by ‘disputation’,<sup>47</sup> which signals that we are once more in the realm of art, in this case dialectic. But

<sup>44</sup> See *De sancta trinitate et operibus eius*, ed. by Rhabanus Haacke, CCCM, 21–24 (1971–72).

<sup>45</sup> Where the titles of these works came from is itself open to question. The enquiries addressed to Hildegard by the monks of Villers were called *quaestiones* both by Guibert de Gembloux and Hildegard when they referred to them in their exchange of letters. While Heloise’s questions are now referred to under the title *Problemata* it is not clear when they were called this or by whom. Heloise refers to them within the text as *quaestiuncula*, the diminutive perhaps being part of her self-deprecating stance. Constant J. Mews, in *The Lost Love Letters of Heloise and Abelard* (New York: St Martin’s, 1999), seems to think the title originated with Heloise but does not say why (p. 116).

<sup>46</sup> On the complex motives animating Heloise’s correspondence with Abelard after she became a nun see Dronke, *Women Writers*, pp. 107–39.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Problemata autem, quae Latine appellantur propositiones, quaestiones sunt habentes aliquid quod disputatione solvendum sit’: *Etymologiarum*, bk VI, chap. 8.

the actual nature of Heloise's *problemata* indicates that, like 'question', the word also had a non-technical sense.<sup>48</sup>

For more on the technical sense (touched on by Isidore) we may turn to John of Salisbury. In the *Metalogicon*, a book written in defence of the teaching of grammar and logic, dedicated to Thomas Becket when he was chancellor, John describes the subject matter of Aristotle's book on the *Topics*. He writes, in Book III, Chapter 5, that it also describes the nature of propositions and problems. 'And since we must proceed to the discussion of problems and the proof of positions, it goes on to treat whence problems are derived, that is, which propositions may, according to the art, be brought into question.'<sup>49</sup> John goes on to note that not everything can form the basis of a problem but only 'such things as are deserving of investigation, and being known contribute something'. He notes a significant limitation to such questioning when he remarks, 'It is pointless to be bothered about everyone who advances propositions contrary to every opinion, nor about futile enquiries concerning trifling matters.'<sup>50</sup> Thus John of Salisbury links *problemata* to dialectic, which in a somewhat roundabout way, leads us to back to Abelard and the technical sense of the *quaestio*.

### *Problemata and Quaestiones*

Abelard's first, and arguably, most impressive intellectual output was in the field of logic.<sup>51</sup> In his *Dialectica* — a freestanding treatise rather than a commentary,

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Andrew of St Victor, *Expositiones historicae in libros Salomonis (Parabolis)*, ed. by Rainer Berndt, CCCM, 53B (1991) l. 6: 'Et intellectu eam percipiet et uerba sapientium, quae difficiliora ad intelligendum esse solent, et aenigmata (id est obscuritates et problemata) eorum, uel sapientium uel uerborum ipsorum, intelligentia capiet' (p. 12); also John of Forde, in *Super extremam partem Cantici canticorum [...]*, ed. by Edmund Mikkers and Hilary Costello, CCCM, 17, 18 (1970): 'Cuius sane esuriei nec Salomon ille in omni sapientia sua ad plenum satisfacere poterat, cum omnia enodasset problemata et aenigmata dissoluisset' (CCCM 17, Sermo 46, p. 328).

<sup>49</sup> 'Et quoniam ad problematum discussionem probatoremque positionum progrediendum est, ex quibus sint problemata, id est ex quae propositiones ex arte deducantur in quaestionem adicit': John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, bk III, chap. 5, p. 120.

<sup>50</sup> 'Neque enim ad omnia quae quaeri possunt, quoniam nec omnia quaerere prudentis est, suas formas applicat, sed ad ea quae digna quaesitu sunt, et cognita aliquid conerunt. Quolibet namque proferente contraria opinionibus aut contemptibilia quaelibet contemptibiliter que inquirente, sollicitari non expedit': John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, bk III, chap. 5, p. 120. An example of such a trifling question is 'whether goats have wool', see bk II, chap. 8, p. 68.

<sup>51</sup> Although some would now wish to emphasize his ethical thought as equally important. See Constant. J. Mews, *Abelard and Heloise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).



though drawing on the Boethian logical texts — he includes discussion of concepts necessary for understanding what we would today call Aristotelian logic. His discussion of questions occurs largely in Tractate 3 in *Topica*.<sup>52</sup>

After treating various kinds of questions, including those which we have referred to above as simple questions in the non-technical sense, where the *vis interrogationis* may be conveyed by prepositions or adverbs such as *quis* or *qualis*, he comes to *dialecticas interrogationes*, which are formed by conjoining an affirmation and a negation. He explains (not entirely helpfully):

For although many questions are asked by dialecticians, such as ‘what’ or ‘what sort’ or many other modes, none is called a dialectical question that is not composed from an affirmation and its own negation when a proof is required of the truth of one or the other (part).<sup>53</sup>

So the dialectical question, or *quaestio*, is a special sort of question composed of two contrary propositions, neither of which appears to be obviously or intuitively true or false. While there is something counterintuitive in calling two conjoined statements a question, this difficulty is also found in Abelard’s sources.<sup>54</sup>

Now that we know what Abelard had in mind by a dialectical question, we can turn to the much misunderstood *Sic et Non*.

<sup>52</sup> *Petrus Abaelardus Dialectica*, ed. by Lambert M. de Rijk (Assen: van Gorcum, 1956), *De Quaestione*, pp. 455–59.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Cum enim multae a dialecticis interrogationes proferuntur uel in quid uel in quale multisque aliis modis, nullam tamen dialecticam uocauit, nisi quae a dialecticis ex affirmationem et propria negatione coniungitur, eum de ueritate alterius probatio exigitur’: *Dialectica*, p. 456.

<sup>54</sup> See Eleonore Stump, *Boethius’s ‘In Ciceronis Topica’* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 187–88 n. 32, on Boethius’s incompatible claims about what a question is: ‘The idea behind the first claim is that every question is equivalent to a proposition, such as “The heaven is spherical,” which is not believed to be true or believed to be false but rather is in doubt for the questioner. The idea behind the second claim is that the proposition underlying a question invariably contains at least implicitly an affirmation and a negation, that every question has the logical form “Is the heaven spherical or isn’t it?” [...] According to the second claim, then, the proposition that is comprised in a question is in effect always a disjunction, such as “The heaven is spherical or the heaven is not spherical.” But this sort of proposition cannot be in *doubt* for anyone, as the first claim maintains it is.’ She suggests a possible solution as follows: ‘on this view the question “Is the heaven spherical?” consists in the proposition “the heaven is spherical” which is in doubt; but the proposition and the questioner’s doubting of it are equivalent to the disjunction “The heaven is spherical, or the heaven is not spherical.”’ On the other hand see Martin Lenz, ‘Peculiar Perfection: Peter Abelard on Propositional Attitudes’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 43 (2005), 377–86. While Lenz does not deal specifically with ‘questions’, the claim that Abelard ‘drew a distinction between propositional content and proposition attitude’ (p. 377) may provide a clue to unravel the problem.



*Sic et Non*

Although this work, a collection of apparently contradictory extracts, largely taken from the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and prefaced by an apologetic introduction, is no longer thought to be as innovative or as revolutionary as it once was, it is the central exhibit in any examination of doubt as an intellectual tool.<sup>55</sup> Abelard's famous statement at the end of his preface to the *Sic et Non*, 'By doubting we come to enquire and by enquiry we come to truth' (Dubitando quippe ad inquisitionem venimus, inquirendo veritatem percipimus), has been described by Beryl Smalley as 'a forceful defence of doubt as a method of enquiry'. But Abelard, does not present this as a new idea; indeed he is keen to justify it in the traditional manner by reference to authority, although he draws equally on non-Christian philosophers (Aristotle), the Fathers of the Church (Augustine), and biblical precedent.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, as Smalley says, 'he strains every nerve to adduce reasons and authorities in support of his method', including that of Jesus at the age of twelve in the Temple.<sup>57</sup> Yet Abelard's method is not one of radical doubt in the sense of questioning the truth of any proposition whatsoever. He is not advocating a general scepticism, as his example of Jesus in the Temple

<sup>55</sup> The first three versions of the work appeared between 1122 and 1127; later ones in 1132 and 1142 or 1144; in its fullest form it had 158 'questions' which Abelard referred to as *sententiae*. In the introduction to the first published edition by Victor Cousin, *Ouvrages inédits d'Abélard pour servir à l'histoire de la philosophie scolastique en France* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1836), Cousin relates how Duchesne decided not to publish the work because of its supposed radical scepticism, an attitude which was anticipated by some of Abelard's contemporary critics such as Guillaume de St-Thierry, although he admitted that he himself had not been able to locate a copy.

<sup>56</sup> Beryl Smalley, *Prima Clavis Sapientiae: Augustine and Abelard*, in *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning from Abelard to Wyclif* (London: Hambleton, 1981), pp. 1–8. We might compare here Hugh of St Victor, *De meditatione*, ed. by Roger Baron, SCH, 155 (1969), chap. 1, p. 44: 'In primo admiratio questionem generat, questio inuestigationem, inuestigatio inuentionem.' But this is more about investigating the natural world and created things (*creatura*).

<sup>57</sup> This precedent was also claimed by Otloh, but in a slightly different context. And compare Ailred, Sermo 42, from *Sermones 1–46*, ed. by Gaetano Raciti, CCCM, 2A (1989). He takes the example of Jesus at the age of twelve 'sitting in the midst of his elders, listening to and questioning them' (sedens ipse in templo in medio seniorum, audiens eos et interrogans) as a pattern for monks 'to be humble, listening and questioning, rather than disputing' (ut mites simus, audientes et interrogantes potius disputantes) (p. 334). He goes on to say: 'Neque enim necesse est homini scire naturas herbarum aut cursus stellarum, sed scire potius quid sit, ubi sit, quid cottidie delinquat, quantum accedat, quantum recedat' (p. 334). We might note, by contrast, that Hildegard was happy to investigate *naturas herbarum* and, to some extent, *cursus stellarum*; see Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, especially chaps 5 and 7.

indicates. According to the Vulgate, Jesus was not 'doubting' in this sense, he was listening and asking questions. Ailred, commenting on the passage in a homily for his monks, emphasizes that Jesus was not disputing with the doctors.

But Abelard's interpretation of Jesus's questioning seems to have allowed for a somewhat more active role (and indeed, one tending more towards disputation than Ailred might have been willing to accept). His innovation here is to use 'doubting' in a specialized, more technical sense, as the method by which one sets up a question to be investigated, according to the art of dialectic.<sup>58</sup> His rigorous application of dialectical methods to theology is both example and proof of the high place he accorded philosophy in general and logic in particular.

### *Abelard's Agenda*

So what did Abelard think he was doing in the *Sic et Non*? It can safely be said that he was not pointing out the relativity of truth in any postmodern way, nor was he attacking the Bible or the Fathers as inherently untrustworthy, although he did believe that the Fathers might be mistaken on occasion, and that the language in some of the Gospels could not be taken at face value.<sup>59</sup> That he was also assembling a series of proof texts which he came to use in his later works must have been an additional bonus.<sup>60</sup> But his claim that he had simply compiled a collection on which his students might cut their intellectual teeth was perhaps disingenuous.

That Abelard actually felt unsure about which side of any given question was true (at any stage) is unlikely, since he confidently presents one side or another of the disjunct as proof for various firmly held positions in his other writings.<sup>61</sup> What

<sup>58</sup> Smalley points out the similarity in method to Augustine's *Quaestionum in Heptateuchum*, which was well known in the twelfth century ('*Prima Clavis*', pp. 3–8). But Augustine does not confine himself to posing and answering questions where evidence supports a proposition and its negation. His questions are not all strictly 'dialectical'.

<sup>59</sup> An example here is where Mary says that she and Jesus's father (meaning Joseph) had been looking for him when he spent time in the Temple at Jerusalem talking to the doctors; that is, this is not to be taken as a claim that Joseph was actually the father of Jesus.

<sup>60</sup> Thus Marenbon in *Peter Abelard: Collationes*, ed. by John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), likens *Sic et Non* to the card indexes of 'scholars before the computer age' (p. xxxiii).

<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that Abelard might not change his mind from time to time or chose to stress one aspect rather than the other in certain circumstances.

has not been emphasized in explanations of the text is that by assembling his collection of 158 groups of opposing extracts in such a manner that they could be posed as dialectical questions, he is also demonstrating that, according to the rules of dialectic, they are subjects which may legitimately be discussed.

Why should he do this? Abelard was at various times charged with going too far in his use of dialectic. Thus Bernard of Clairvaux describes him as one who 'having played around with dialectic since his youth then ran mad among the sacred Scriptures'.<sup>62</sup> Obviously this demonstration of legitimacy would not convince Bernard and his like-minded friends such as Guillaume de St-Thierry. Yet it could have been something Abelard needed to set out for himself and for those who shared his view of dialectic as the handmaid of truth. In other words it seems, on one level, at least, to be a formal exercise in establishing the field of what could be argued about. Indeed it is a formal method of discovering what might be doubted rather than a record of questions prompted by his own particular doubts (as was the case, for example, with St Augustine, Heloise, and the monks of Villers).

There are, however, a few odd aspects to the whole procedure which need to be dealt with. First, it should be noted that Abelard does not seem to have called the 158 sections of his work *quaestiones*, but rather, *sententiae*.<sup>63</sup> It appears that Victor Cousin, the first editor of the *Sic et Non*, introduced the former terminology, possibly seeing in Abelard's collection prototypes of the scholastic *quaestiones* of the following century. For what Abelard presents in this work is the penultimate step before the formalization of the question as it came to be developed over the next half century. He puts the two propositions drawn from a variable number of texts representing each side of the question together but does not actually present them in what became the canonical *quaestio* form, that is, as a disjunction beginning with *utrum*.<sup>64</sup> Or possibly, like Abelard's contemporary readers, Cousin, being himself steeped in Aristotelian concepts, recognized the makings of a dialectical question when he saw them. The traditional history of the

<sup>62</sup> 'Habemus in Francia novum de veteri magistro theologum, qui ab ineunte aetate sua in arte dialectica lusit, et nunc in Scripturis sanctis insanit': Bernard of Clairvaux, Ep. 190, in *SBO*, VIII, 17.

<sup>63</sup> Perhaps this was because the term *quaestiones* had already been appropriated by writers such as Augustine for *answers* to previous (not strictly dialectical) questions. He wanted to emphasize the posing of strictly dialectical questions as the first step to more profound investigations.

<sup>64</sup> This is also the canonical form for expressing a doubt.

development of the question certainly involves some famous pupils of Abelard such as Gilbert of Poitiers and Odo of Ourscamp.<sup>65</sup>

But if ‘doubting’ is just the prerequisite for enquiry, in that it sets up the questions that need to be settled, what is the method of enquiry by which Abelard claims we reach the truth? His instructions toward this end are largely of a textual-critical nature rather than depending on formal logical moves.<sup>66</sup> Some of them are intended first to weed out the questions that are only apparent contradictions (and hence not really questions at all). Some of them are plainly wrong, in that the writer did not say them, or what he did say has been subsequently misinterpreted. For example, one side of the disjunction might not mean what it appears to say, and thus there is actually no disagreement. But Abelard also allows that some questions cannot be solved by using the methods he suggests. Here his advice is ‘But if the dispute is so intractable that it cannot be resolved by reasoning, then the authorities should be compared, and that authority which has more weight as evidence and is best corroborated should chiefly be retained.’ He draws here on the words of Isidore, in a letter to Bishop Massius, who advised that if contradictions were found in the pronouncements of ecclesiastical councils one should rely on ‘the older or better authority’.<sup>67</sup> But this will not really get us very far in the case of opposing statements by two equally weighty Fathers. It is not much help to know that Abelard preferred the authority of Bede over Abbot Hilduin de

<sup>65</sup> See Grabmann, *Geschichte*, p. 25, and cf. N. Häring, ‘Abelard, Yesterday and Today’, in *PA & PV*, pp. 341–52: ‘Abelard’s direct influence is also seen in the writings of Odo of Ourscamp and his school. Odo, who had heard Abelard lecture, developed the systematic use of the *quaestio*, a method initiated by Abelard. A number of manuscripts that contain *quaestiones* belonging to this school are still in existence’ (p. 352).

<sup>66</sup> This is because while Abelard might have taken his *definition* of the question from dialectic, the subject matter of many of the questions he assembled are not so strictly defined (e.g., ‘Was John the only unmarried disciple or not?’). Here the distinction relates to the presence or absence of extraneous circumstances. See the definition of ‘thesis’ and ‘hypothesis’ as made in the logical texts such as Boethius, *De differentiis topicis*, bk IV, and John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, bk II, chap. 12, p. 74. The distinction here is between, for example, ‘Is a pearl a stone or not?’ a question which (according to Aristotelian logic) does not depend on contingent circumstances and others, which have regard to particular persons, places, and so on, as in the case of the question about the Apostle. As G. R. Evans points out in ‘The Place of Odo of Soissons’ *Quaestiones*: Problem-Solving in Mid-Twelfth Century Bible Study and Some Matters of Logic and Language’, *RTAM*, 49 (1982), 121–40, the way of dealing with questions became increasingly standardized according to rules derived from the *logica nova*.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Quod si forte adeo manifesta sit controversia ut nulla possit absolvi ratione, conferendae sunt auctoritates, et quae potioris est testimonii et maioris confirmationis potissimum retinenda’: Abelard, *Sic et Non*, prologue, p. 96. Cf. Isidore, Ep. 4.13, in PL, LXXXIII, cols 901–02.

St Denys on the grounds that Bede's 'writings are accepted by the entire Latin Church' and those of the Abbot presumably only by the monks of St Denys (and obviously not all of them), as we read in his *Historia calamitatum*.<sup>68</sup> Yet some writers were prepared to hazard a preference among equals, as when John of Salisbury declared that Jerome was the preferred patristic authority on questions of the biblical canon.<sup>69</sup>

So far so good, but Abelard's dependence on the Aristotelian notion of a 'question' as transmitted by Cicero and Boethius has the unexpected result of rendering his method less radical than it might at first seem. What kinds of questions do we find in the *Sic et Non*? Luscombe has suggested that the questions chosen form an outline for a kind of *summa*.<sup>70</sup> If so, it is a rather patchy outline since while it starts with questions about the nature of faith and continues with sections on the Trinity and the Incarnation, including what might seem to be a good many historical questions about the Apostles, the sacraments are only sparsely covered, marriage and penance getting the greater share. Indeed the collection seems more to reflect Abelard's own special interests, rather than being a comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the faith. This, of course, strengthens the argument for the work as a whole being a legitimizing strategy for Abelard's own investigations.<sup>71</sup>

### *Doubt and Knowledge*

What, then, should we think of Abelard's method as a way of discovering new knowledge (even in its guise of recovering old knowledge)? In that it only adjudicates between propositions which have already been enunciated it may seem less productive than the more immediate and open-ended non-dialectical questions.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> 'Unde cum unus eorum me importuna interrogatione pulsaret quid mihi super hac controversia, Bede videlicet atque Huldoini, videretur, respondi Bede auctoritatem, cujus scripta uniuerse Latinorum frequentant Ecclesie, gratiorem mihi videri': Abelard, *Historia calamitatum*, p. 90.

<sup>69</sup> John of Salisbury, *Letters*, Ep. 209, p. 320, to Henry, Count of Champagne.

<sup>70</sup> David E. Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 94–95.

<sup>71</sup> The development of the *summa* and various twelfth-century attempts to produce them is comprehensively treated by Marcia Colish in *Peter Lombard*.

<sup>72</sup> 'Primo quidem nosse de aliquo an sit, deinde quid, quale, quantum, ad aliquid, ubi, quando sit, quomodo situm, quid habeat, faciat, patiat. Nouissima speculatio est in singulis, quare sic [...]

On the other hand, Abelard is concerned with finding the truth, or as close as humanity can come to it in the present life. So it is not just a debating game, although his suggestion that it would be a useful pedagogical exercise for his students was perhaps unfortunate.<sup>73</sup> We can imagine what St Bernard would have thought of such an idea when he considered Abelard himself unfit to discuss such matters.

So if, according to Abelard, some things, such as the absolute authority of the Fathers, were open to question we might wonder what were the limits he set to such questioning. We have already noted that 'questioning' works in a similar way to 'doubting' in that it is ambiguous. Here we need to make a distinction between modern English and twelfth-century Latin usage. In English, 'questioning' can mean a general request for knowledge about something. We may compare this with being uncertain about something (as in the Latin *dubitare de*). But 'questioning' can be used in English with the stronger sense of 'doubting', for example, where 'questioning the existence of God' means 'doubting that God exists'. The distinction that Abelard has drawn attention to, between the ordinary and the dialectical question, identifies the second sort of doubt, that is, the doubting of a proposition, cast in the special form of the proposition and its negation.

Now it may be the case that psychological (i.e., felt) doubt leads to questions, since it is canonically expressed in question form.<sup>74</sup> However, when questioning in the Aristotelian sense, it seems that the act of assembling the 'question' merely

sed diuinae maiestatis praerogatiuam accedit': John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, bk III, chap. 3, p. 110. This last question depends on divine grace, which will, however open the door to 'those who knock' (*pulsantibus*); cf. Matt. 7. 8.

<sup>73</sup> Though even this is not to say that Abelard was cavalier with the truth. Just because he thought of his (and others') theological propositions/arguments as 'probable' did not mean that they were just as likely to be false as true. The distinction is between true and demonstrable, rather than true and false. *Verisimilis* is more usefully translated as 'readily accepted' than 'probable'. On Abelard and the truth see further *Theologia 'scholarium'*, ed. by E. M. Buytaert and C. J. Mews CCCM, 13 (1987), bk II, chap. 18, p. 414.

<sup>74</sup> But not always, or perhaps only at the extreme end of the uncertainty scale. Otloh does not seem to put his doubt regarding the existence of God unequivocally in the canonical form with *utrum*. His uncertainty (externalized as a conversation with the Devil) encompasses many aspects, including questions about the Scriptures and their writers, and is described as 'a cloud of doubt' Gäbe, *Liber de temptatione*, p. 260. His wide-ranging discussion on theological questions, in the form of a dialogue with the monk 'Henry' is entitled *Dialogus de tribus quaestionibus* but turns out to be 'de diuinae pietatis agnitione, iudiciorumque diuinorum diversitate, nec non de varia bene agendi facultate' (PL, CXLVI, cols 59–134; col. 61), and by no means restricted to questions in the dialectical sense.

produces a formal doubt. When someone addresses this formal doubt which they had not previously considered, psychological uncertainty may or may not be felt.

### *Limits of Doubt*

Although Abelard seems to have wanted to enlarge the scope of the *questionable*, the Aristotelian method had a major drawback. It ruled out questioning statements that were held to be true by all, the many, or the learned. As Abelard himself notes,<sup>75</sup> ‘What seems true to all men, or most men or the learned should not be contradicted.’<sup>76</sup> Despite this, in *Sic et Non*, Abelard was able to set up a range of questions by finding disagreement among the wise, usually the Fathers of the Church, though sometimes the Apostles or philosophers such as Boethius are included. In this way he is able to raise some puzzling questions concerning, for example, the omniscience and omnipotence of God.<sup>77</sup>

Yet it may be that Anselm, because he was not so wedded to the letter of dialectic, was able to pose, at an earlier stage, a much more radical question about the existence of God. Rather than disregarding the Fool ‘who says in his heart there is no God’ he uses this figure to elaborate what became known as the ontological argument for God’s existence. Perhaps even more remarkable is Gaunilo’s reply on behalf of the Fool, in response to which Anselm was forced to make some adjustments to the original argument.<sup>78</sup> Obviously when the strict idea of the Aristotelian *questio* is adhered to, which rules out questions about which all, the many, or the wise are in agreement, this sort of exchange is not as likely to arise.

<sup>75</sup> ‘Quod omnibus uel pluribus uel doctis uidetur hominibus, ei contradici non oportere’: Peter Abelard, *Theologia ‘christiana’*, ed. by E. M. Buytaert, CCCM, 12 (1969), bk III, chap. 49, p. 214.

<sup>76</sup> That this was a commonplace is seen from its converse: ‘Jure insanus judicare | Si contra insanos altercarer’, described as ‘a jingle based on Boethius’ by John F. Benton, *Self and Society in Medieval France*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, 15 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press in association with the Medieval Academy of America, 1984). He translates this as ‘If against the mad I strain | I’d be rightly thought insane’. The reference is to the fifth tractate in *Theological Tractates*, ed. by H. F. Stewart and E. K. Rand (London: Loeb, 1918), p. 74.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Quod omnia possit Deus et non’; ‘Quod omnia sciat deus et non’: Abelard, *Sic et Non*, qu. 32, p. 180, and qu. 38, p. 188.

<sup>78</sup> As Southern remarks, that Gaunilo was an otherwise unknown monk from Marmoutier near Tours says a lot about the general standards prevailing at the time in Benedictine monasteries. *The Life of St Anselm by Eadmer*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Southern, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), p. 31 n. 2.



Abelard, in using reason (i.e., dialectic) to enlarge the boundaries of what might be debated, could be said to be championing reason over faith, in that he relies on logic to define what can be discussed. Yet there is a sense in which for Abelard the distinction between faith and reason was not as clear-cut as his adversaries might have thought. Abelard accorded (classical) philosophy an unusually prominent place in salvation history, believing that it had discovered many of the truths of Christianity — including, most controversially, knowledge of the Trinity — in its own right, as well as providing the tools for understanding the subsequently revealed religion. These views can be found throughout his work but are given extended expression in two dialogues of an unusual kind, to which we will now turn.

### *Dialogue and Debate*

The large numbers of twelfth-century writings cast in the form of debates, dialogues, or discussions might suggest that a spirit of enquiry was widespread during the period.<sup>79</sup> But such literary forms do not in any sense map actual debates that may or may not have been held ‘outside the text’.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, very few examples can be found in the period of the kind of open-ended debate that questions established points of view; many are simply pedagogical exercises, where the form is felt to make the teaching more palatable or clearer. Others are entirely one-sided affairs where the position argued for is firmly established from the outset.<sup>81</sup>

In a similar way, the actual incidence of personally experienced doubt that led to some form of intellectual enquiry is hard to gauge. Once again St Anselm may provide the exception, although it was doubt about how to *prove* the existence of God by reason rather than doubt *about* the actual existence of God which

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): ‘Dialogue and dialectic — the science of doubt, as it has been called — played a fundamental part in the thought processes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It underlay the discipline of disputation that developed in the schools and was applied to almost every branch of intellectual inquiry, including religious and spiritual questions’ (p. 130).

<sup>80</sup> Some possible exceptions, namely Jewish-Christian debates, will be examined in the next chapter.

<sup>81</sup> See Sabina Flanagan, ‘The *Speculum virginum* and Traditions of Medieval Dialogue’, in *Listen Daughter: The ‘Speculum Virginum’ and the Formation of Religious Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Constant J. Mews (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 181–200.



troubled him.<sup>82</sup> This not only ‘took away his desire for food, drink and sleep’ but also, more importantly, distracted him from his monastic devotions to such an extent that he thought his search for a method must be a temptation of the Devil.<sup>83</sup> A more generalized uncertainty may have been the impulse for much of the intellectual activity of the time which was concerned with codifying and setting out more clearly rules and guidelines applicable to all aspects of the Christian life.

### *Abelard’s ‘Soliloquium’*

Leaving aside the many treatises, commentaries, and expositions cast in the form of debates or dialogues we can single out for special attention two works in debate form by Abelard himself. Let us turn first to his *Soliloquium*.<sup>84</sup> It might be remarked here that although there was a possibility of a real debate (essentially by arguing with two different aspects of himself) the result is hardly disputatious.<sup>85</sup> In this dialogue between Peter and Abelard, the two participants seem to be in remarkable agreement, indeed, of one mind.

Thus it would perhaps be better to describe the work, with Charles Burnett, as a ‘meditation’ rather than a debate.<sup>86</sup> Peter and Abelard reflect on the meanings of the names *Christus*, *Sapientia*, and *Verbum* as applied to the Christian God and their adjectival implications for Christians. Thus Abelard says, ‘So according to the Gospels, since Christ is that very wisdom of God which the Greeks call *sophia*, I protest that no people are more rightly called philosophers than those who live

<sup>82</sup> In fact Southern remarks that ‘Eadmer evidently did not look on the work [*Proslogion*] primarily as a proof of the *existence* of God but as a proof that the attributes of God are such as the Christian faith holds them to be. In a sense he was justified in this, because Anselm’s philosophical outlook, strictly speaking, excluded the possibility of God’s non-existence’: *Vita Anselmi*, p. 29 n. 3. However, because of the possibility of a contrary view — however foolish or mistaken — he went on to tackle the problem.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Nam haec cogitatio partim illi cibum, potum et somnum tollebat, partim et quod magis eum gravabat intentionem ejus qua matutinis et aliis servitio Dei intendere debebat perturbabat’: *Vita Anselmi*, bk I, chap. 19, pp. 29–30.

<sup>84</sup> ‘Peter Abelard *Soliloquium*: A Critical Edition’, ed. and trans. by Charles Burnett, *Studi Medievali*, ser. 3, 25 (1984), 857–94.

<sup>85</sup> Compare Augustine’s *Soliloquiorum libri duo*, in PL, XXXII, cols 869–904, where the opposing points of view are represented by *Ratio* and *Augustinus*.

<sup>86</sup> Burnett, ‘Peter Abelard, *Soliloquium*’, p. 874.

as lovers of this highest and perfect wisdom.<sup>87</sup> He then suggests that the Greeks ‘would not have submitted to the yoke of the teaching of the Gospel so quickly had [they] not been prepared for this in advance by the writings of the philosophers’.<sup>88</sup> Abelard adds that Christians should also be called ‘logicians’ since ‘Christ is called God’s word [*logos*]’ and ‘according to the etymology of the word, all those who cling to this true and perfect word through teaching and love, should truly be called logicians as well as philosophers, and no discipline ought more truly to be called “logic” than Christian doctrine.’<sup>89</sup> Peter admits this is not common usage but Abelard points out that it is attested by the way things are in reality.<sup>90</sup> Then he goes on to describe a kind of progression or unfolding of knowledge: from the teachings of gentiles to the Gospel of Christ, and thence to Pentecost which he believed rendered the Apostles ‘perfect both in speech and knowledge, so that they would be able to explain from the beginning what they perfectly understood’.<sup>91</sup>

### *Abelard’s ‘Collationes’*

We find the same underlying ideas of the relationship between philosophy and theology in his *Collationes* (c. 1127–31), a work which is sometimes known as the *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew and a Christian*.<sup>92</sup> In fact, the work,

<sup>87</sup> ‘Sed et iuxta Apostolum, cum sit Christus ipsa *Dei sapientia* quam sophiam Greci nominant, nullos rectius dici philosophos autumo quam qui huius summe ac perfecte sapientie amatores existunt’: Burnett, ‘Peter Abelard, *Soliloquium*’, pp. 886–87.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Neque enim Grecia tot philosophicis rationibus armata, evangelice predicationis iugo colla tam cito submisisset nisi antea scriptis philosophorum [...] ad hoc esset preparata’: Burnett, ‘Peter Abelard, *Soliloquium*’, p. 889. Interestingly, the Philosopher tends to discount this argument in *Collationes*, 2.70, p. 88 saying ‘nec ipsos maiores nostros ad fidei uestre confessionem tam ratione ductos quam ui tractos esse credimus’ (and we believe that those ancestors of ours were not led by reason to confessing your faith but rather were dragged there by force). Here he seems to be referring to the conversion of ‘emperors and rulers’ who then forced their people to convert. For Abelard’s *Collationes* see the next section of this chapter.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Hinc, et iuxta nominis ethimologiam, quicumque huic vero ac profecto verbo per doctrinam et amorem coherent, vere logici sicut et philosophi dicendi sunt, nullaue disciplina verius logica dici debet quam Christiana doctrina’: Burnett, ‘Peter Abelard, *Soliloquium*’, p. 889.

<sup>90</sup> ‘Immo etiam res ipsas plurimum attestari’: Burnett, ‘Peter Abelard, *Soliloquium*’, p. 890.

<sup>91</sup> ‘[U]t tam verbis eos quam scientia perfectos efficeret, ut que perfecte cognoscerent disserere ad integrum possent’: Burnett, ‘Peter Abelard, *Soliloquium*’, p. 890.

<sup>92</sup> The edition and translation of John Marenbon and Giovanni Orlandi, *Peter Abelard: Collationes*, supersedes all previous editions and translations. For a discussion of the dating see pp. xxvii–xxxii.

which is cast as a dream vision, consists of two dialogues, one between the (pagan) philosopher and the Jew, and one between the philosopher and the Christian, with Abelard himself supposedly adjudicating. The subject of the discussions, which are a good deal more combative than the *Soliloquium*, though generally polite, is ultimately the nature of the Highest Good. In the first the Philosopher tries to prove that natural law is superior to the revealed law of the Old Testament, while the second is largely concerned with identifying the greatest good and the greatest evil. As Mews has pointed out, this dialogue is one where there is some real discussion, and it is not always easy to see whose points of view Abelard is endorsing, if any.<sup>93</sup> This is further complicated by the apparently unfinished nature of the work.<sup>94</sup> Throughout the dialogues Abelard sometimes seems to be endorsing the view of the Philosopher (most obviously in the debate with the Jew), and sometimes that of the Christian, although even in the second part the Philosopher often puts forward positions that Abelard himself espouses in other works.<sup>95</sup> While the arguments of the Jew are generally refuted, the Jewish participant is portrayed with an unusual degree of sympathy for the time.<sup>96</sup>

However, the starting point for all four characters in the debate is a belief in the One God, which puts it in a different, and less radical, league from Anselm's *Proslogion*. Abelard is keen to argue that there is a place for reason and logical argument in matters of faith when he presents the Philosopher as scornful of those who accept the faith in which they were raised unreflectively (in this case, the Jew, but the argument would also apply to Christians) and criticizes those who boast that they cannot speak about their faith. He also points out that in matters of faith the general tendency of understanding to increase over the ages seems not to have held, even though error in this particular instance is most

<sup>93</sup> See Constant J. Mews, 'Peter Abelard and the Enigma of Dialogue', in *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration before the Enlightenment*, ed. by John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), pp. 25–52.

<sup>94</sup> Mews argues that it is not necessarily unfinished, but see the discussion in Olivari and Marenbon, *Collationes*, pp. lxxxvi–lxxxviii. The fact that although it is introduced as a dream vision, the debates are not actually framed as such (the dreamer does not describe himself as waking up again, the usual pattern in this genre) might also suggest that it was left unfinished.

<sup>95</sup> This is not surprising since Abelard modified his ideas over time. Sometimes the Philosopher seems to be taking a more extreme view that Abelard had advocated himself.

<sup>96</sup> At least as far as the miserable contemporary sociopolitical position of Jews was concerned. Theologically, they are portrayed according to twelfth-century Christian views about their beliefs and place in salvation history. See *Collationes*, pp. xlv–l.

dangerous.<sup>97</sup> He complains that those who are judged to be most steadfast in the faith are those whose understanding is on a par with the uneducated and, presumably, unreflective, lowest common denominator. Thus he claims, '[N]o one is allowed to enquire into what should be believed among his own people, or to doubt what everyone affirms, without fear of punishment.'<sup>98</sup> Here once again we may glimpse the rationale for the *Sic et Non*. By showing that not everyone did, in fact, share the same opinion on selected matters of faith, Abelard was able to demonstrate that they were subjects fit for investigation.<sup>99</sup> In the end, the Jew seems to be brought around to the Philosopher's view of natural law but Abelard's final pronouncement on the matter is postponed (and in fact, never given). In his encounter with the Christian, the Philosopher says he will only accept what is provable, subject to reason. He argues against the idea that faith lacks merit when human reason provides proofs, a question which was also canvassed in *Sic et Non*.<sup>100</sup> He also claims to have little faith in the value of authoritative texts in argumentation. It should be noted that Abelard would have sided with the Philosopher in the first case but in his own practice appears to go against the second.<sup>101</sup> But while it is true that Abelard makes great use of authoritative texts in his works, he has first subjected them to his own dialectical scrutiny and reached his own conclusions on their truth and appositeness. The Christian here does not seem to disagree with the Philosopher's position. Although he points out

<sup>97</sup> 'Quod enim mirabile est, cum per etatum seriem et temporum successionem humana in ceteris rebus intelligentia crescat, in fide, cuius erroris summum periculum imminet, nullus est profectus': *Collationes*, 1, 8, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> '[S]ed eque minores ut maiores, eque rustici ut literati de hac sentire asseruntur, et ille firmissimus in fide dicitur, qui communem populi non excedit sensum. Quod profecto inde certum est accidere, quod nemini apud suos licet quid sit credendum inquirere, nec de his que ab omnibus dicuntur, impune dubitare': *Collationes*, 1.8, p. 10.

<sup>99</sup> It should be noted that the Philosopher here is not himself doubting the claim that those things which everyone believes should not be questioned. It is rather the fact that most people assume that matters of faith are settled. However, as Abelard shows by assembling the *Sic et Non*, there is disagreement among the *docti* which opens up the field to rational discussion — at least on the questions he has identified.

<sup>100</sup> The quotation from Gregory the Great, *Homilia .xl. in Euangelia*, 11.26 (PL, LXXXVI, col. 1197), is the first extract cited in Question 1: 'Quod fides humanis rationibus non sit adstruenda et contra.'

<sup>101</sup> We might say that Abelard here seems to have hedged somewhat on the first topic and would probably have said it was a matter of degree, some aspects of the faith being more or less susceptible to reason. See Marenbon's discussion in *Collationes*, p. 90 n. 24.

that reasoning can go wrong, he also makes a connection between reason and Christ, as Abelard did in the *Soliloquium*.<sup>102</sup> He declares, 'Certainly, none of us possessed of good judgement forbids the faith from being investigated and discussed by rational argument, nor is it reasonable to accept what is doubtful, unless a reason is offered for why it should be accepted.'<sup>103</sup> Drawing on Boethius's definition in *Topics*, Book I, of an argument as a 'reason which brings about faith in the thing which is doubted' the Christian goes somewhat further here than we might think prudent when he declares:

For it is not what is in reality the case which is relevant to strengthening a person's faith, but rather what can be put as an opinion [...]. But when a reason is given — even if it is not a reason but just seems to be one — no question remains, because no doubt is left.<sup>104</sup>

While this might seem an odd explanation for a seeker of truth, Abelard's account should be seen in terms of the psychology, rather than the logic of argumentation.<sup>105</sup> As far as Abelard is concerned, the truth of the matter in questions of faith, about which the person needs to be persuaded, is a given. But it is not necessarily and demonstrably true as is the case with a mathematical proposition.<sup>106</sup>

### *Reason and Authority*

As we have seen, Abelard was not slow to employ authoritative texts, both biblical and patristic, in defence of his own positions, even though he held that an unexamined use of such texts, especially in the case of the Fathers, was not to be encouraged. So how does this fit into the wider picture of the role of reason versus authority?

<sup>102</sup> '[A] quo tamquam uera sophia idest sapientia Dei quicumque instructi sunt, ueri sunt dicendi philosophi': *Collationes*, chap. 77, p. 88. Cf. Burnett, 'Peter Abelard, *Soliloquium*', pp. 889–87.

<sup>103</sup> 'Nemo certe nostrum, qui discretus sit, rationibus fidem uestigari ac discuti uetat, nec rationabiliter his que dubia fuerint acquiescitur, nisi cur acquiescendum sit ratione premissa': *Collationes*, chap. 77, p. 96.

<sup>104</sup> 'Neque enim ad fidem astruendam refert quid sit in rei ueritate, sed quid in opinionem possit uenire [...]. Post rationem uero redditam, etiamsi ratio non sit sed uideatur, nulla questio remanet, quia nulla dubitatio superest': *Collationes*, chap. 77, p. 98.

<sup>105</sup> In her book *Boethius's 'De Topicis Differentiis'* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), Eleonore Stump explains the way in which Aristotelian logic should be seen as more psychologically based than modern formal logic.

<sup>106</sup> Compare Marenbon, *Collationes*, p. 98 n. 42.

It could be argued that in the early Middle Ages the answers to emerging questions in philosophy and theology were still being worked out and that they were in some sense provisional. Moreover such investigations were decentralized and there was no proper mechanism for getting the answers codified and circulated.<sup>107</sup> Surely there was some dampening of free enquiry as the result of the notion that the answers were now more or less accessible and that there was a body (the pope in the case of canon law, or the University of Paris in theology) who either had them or could pronounce on their orthodoxy. The increase in the numbers of intellectuals accused of producing heretical writings over the twelfth century also suggests that this was the case.<sup>108</sup>

It might be wondered whether there were new questions as well as new or improved tools for enquiry. I have suggested that Abelard, by being so bound to the letter of Aristotelian dialectic, was questioning/doubting in a rather limited (and limiting) way. This was partly because he was dependent on what others had already written even for his questions, at least as far as *Sic et Non* is concerned. He combed through the writings of the Fathers and the Bible to identify the questions which he could then put up for adjudication; he did not appear to formulate the questions himself from the free play of his own *ingenium* nor from a profoundly felt sense of personal doubt.<sup>109</sup> In this way he was just going over old questions. Indeed, we have seen that the question in *Sic et Non* about the punishment of infants is referred to at about the same time by Rupert von Deutz as a 'magna et antiqua quaestio'.<sup>110</sup> Also if it were a case of one side being right and the other wrong, there does not seem to have been much chance of entirely novel discoveries in strictly theological matters. Here we might compare the work of some of the twelfth-century biblical commentators, such as Andrew of St Victor,

<sup>107</sup> See for example R. W. Southern, *St Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 265–68, concerning Anselm's ignorance, at a time when he was Archbishop of Canterbury, of papal decrees bearing on lay investiture.

<sup>108</sup> See J. M. M. H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris 1200–1400* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

<sup>109</sup> It is interesting that there are very few explicit doubt words to be found in Abelard's writings, including his *Historia calamitatum*. Abelard seems from the very beginning to have presented himself as completely lacking in both intellectual and also self-doubt. That this may have been achieved with difficulty is perhaps suggested by the various times at which he had to withdraw from public life due to a breakdown in his health. We may compare the case of Hildegard, although her illnesses, since she took them to be divine admonitions, actually provided the confidence she needed to write. See Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, chap. 3.

<sup>110</sup> *In Deuteronomium* 1, chap. 32, p. 1053; in *De sancta trinitate et operibus eius*, CCCM 22.

who by sticking to commentary and elucidating the historical meaning of the text, rather than tackling what might now be termed questions of speculative theology, were sometimes able to introduce new explanations, often based on their knowledge of Jewish sources.<sup>111</sup> In a similar way, Richard of St Victor recognized that the earlier Fathers had been more intent on allegorical meanings of the Scriptures and had not sought to explain the literal meaning if it seemed absurd or inappropriate, a deficiency which he accordingly sought to supply.<sup>112</sup>

Another drawback arising from too close a dependence on the dialectical definition of the question was that it meant that some of the most important questions could not even be posed since they were thought to be self-evident or non-controversial, and it should be noted that self-evidence here fell some way short of a logical tautology. A proposition only had to appear true to 'all, the many, or the wise' for it to be put beyond the pale of being questioned. Yet these readily accepted statements may in fact be the very ones which should be questioned. On a strict Boethian/Aristotelian interpretation of the question, whether God exists or not could not really be asked, since he who put the counterclaim was by definition 'the Fool' and by Aristotle/Boethius's criterion the objections of the fool should not have been heeded.

This raises an interesting dilemma when we come to the case of the Jews. As being ipso facto blind and lacking in rationality, their objections to the Faith should not have worried Christians on a strictly dialectical view of things. Thus Herbert of Bosham's doubt, though it was presumably prompted by his awareness of Jewish interpretations of Old Testament passages which were contrary to Christian ones, would not have arisen if Abelard's method of dialectical questioning had been strictly followed.

But the results of even the limited approach which Abelard sought to justify proved too much for some. Towards the end of the century Étienne de Tournai could write:

The wind of secular knowledge puffs up and corrupts. Puffs up through vainglory, corrupts by false teaching. They propose unintelligible and insoluble questions, some wicked and faithless ones even concerning the mystery of the Trinity, or the Incarnation and Resurrection [...] our task is to praise God'.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> See Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, p. 128.

<sup>112</sup> Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, p. 109.

<sup>113</sup> 'Ventus saecularis scientiae inflat et corrumpit. inflat per vanam gloriam. corrumpit per falsam doctrinam [...]. Proponunt quaestiones insolubiles non intelligibiles nonnunquam etiam circa misteria trinitatis seu incarnationis resurrectionis nefandas et infideles [...] officium nostrum



## Conclusion

The formalization of doubt as a method of enquiry, as opposed to the more intuitive method of open-ended questioning, presents us with a sort of historical irony. In the early stages of scholasticism the *questions* were defined in such a way that the most profound could not be asked, since they diverged too much from what was commonly held by right-thinking people. Later, such questions could be posed, for example in the academic exercises of the schools, but only because they were not really doubted. One side was known to be true already and they became simply pedagogical exercises.<sup>114</sup>

Moreover, we could say that once the old questions had been asked, the raising of new questions had to depend on the importation of new material rather than being self-generated, and thus the method was always inevitably 'reactive' rather than proactive. But new material did sometimes appear, as with the recovery of the remaining Aristotelian corpus. Thus new questions could again be raised. When this happened the immediate reaction of the authorities, as in Paris in 1210 and later, was to subvert the whole questioning enterprise, either by attempting to prevent the new texts being studied, or by declaring various positions heretical.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, once the new material had been sufficiently domesticated such questions were allowed to be debated.

As has been intimated, this use of formal doubt as a trigger for debate raises some interesting problems with regard to the Jews. Despite the assumption that they were not equals (nor, indeed, even human according to some) and hence their objections should not have provoked debate, the reality seems to have been

esse debat laudare deum': *Étienne de Tournai et son temps*, ed. by J. Warichez (Tournai: Annales de la société royale d'histoire et d'archéologie de Tournai, 1936), p. 102.

<sup>114</sup> Gillian Evans makes a similar point with regard to medieval dialogues in *Getting It Wrong: The Medieval Epistemology of Error* (Leiden: Brill, 1998): 'The earlier Middle Ages produced examples of both the "catechism" and the "Augustinian" or "Socratic" types of dialogue. Anselm of Canterbury's dialogues are perhaps the supreme examples of the latter. But in the later Middle Ages formal disputation does not have the purpose of finding the answer by discussion. It is usually a method of selecting the correct one from a series of known arguments in play at the time' (p. 107).

<sup>115</sup> See for example, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ed. by H. Denifle and A. Chatelain, 4 vols (Paris: Delalain, 1889–97), I, 70: 11. *Decreta magistri Petri de Corbolio Senonensis archiepiscopi, Parisiensis episcopi atque aliorum episcoporum Parisiis congregatorum super haereticis comburendis et super libris Aristotelis aliorumque*. 1210 Parisiis. See also J. M. M. H. Thijssen, 'Master Amalric and the Amalricians: Inquisitorial Procedure and the Suppression of Heresy at the University of Paris', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 43–65.



that some discussions between Jews and Christians that we find portrayed in the literature of the twelfth century were actually based on real occurrences. Thus, whatever the theory might have said, such objections had to be met, and Jews met with. Some of these debates will be examined in the next chapter.



## DISADVANTAGES OF DOUBT

In the last chapter we considered Peter Abelard's debate between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian. This was just one, though true to its author, a characteristically unusual example of the Christian-Jewish debate or polemic of the time.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I want to consider the nature and purpose of such writings and their relationship to doubt. On the one hand they can be considered as part of the intellectual process, whereby Jews, by denying certain tenets of the Christian faith, could be seen as giving rise to questions that needed to be debated. These were questions in the formal dialectical sense, though technically, by denying what all or the many or the wise within the Christian community accepted, whether the Jews should be answered was a moot point. On the other hand, they can be studied in relation to the doubts of individual Christians who perhaps externalized their own uncertainties, or the uncertainties of their contemporaries, in the form of debates.

*Debates: Fact or Fiction?*

The consensus here is that while there are records of actual debates having taken place at various times, not every piece of writing in debate form represents a historical occurrence of any such specific interaction.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there were

<sup>1</sup> See Amos Funkenstein, 'Basic Types of Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Later Middle Ages', *Viator*, 2 (1971), 373–82. For an introduction to the expanding literature on this subject see *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. by Michael A. Signer and John Van Engen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), especially pp. 1–8.

<sup>2</sup> See Anna Sapir Abulafia, 'An Eleventh-Century Exchange of Letters between a Christian and a Jew', *Journal of Medieval History*, 7 (1981), 153–74.

varying degrees of mediation through which such material was worked up into its literary form, and finally, some debates were purely fictional, or perhaps we might say 'virtual/vestigial'. In Peter the Venerable's invective the Jew is present only when apostrophized and insulted.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Anna Sapir Abulafia writes of Gilbert Crispin's *Disputatio Iudei et Christiani* (c. 1093), 'There is no reason to doubt that actual conversations with a Jew underlie the *Disputatio*, even though the Jew puts forward arguments which are, at times, startlingly Christian.'<sup>4</sup> Some hundred years later it seems that Peter of Cornwall (author of the book of miracles encountered in Chapter 4) also based his *Liber disputationum Petri contra Symonem Iudeum* on real discussions he had with a Jew whom he managed to convert and who later entered Holy Trinity where he was prior.<sup>5</sup> For an example from another geographical area, Irvén Resnick concludes that Odo of Tournai's discussion with a Jew whom he calls Leo is also likely to be based on fact.<sup>6</sup> Rupert von Deutz, whose *Anulus sive dialogus inter Christianum et Iudaeum* was written in 1126 is also presumed to have held discussions with Jews. This is partly based on the statement of Hermann-Judah that he debated matters of faith with him before converting to Christianity and entering the Monastery of Cappenberg.<sup>7</sup> This claim is somewhat undermined by the equivocal status of Hermann's *Opusculum de conversione sua* which has received its latest treatment by J.-C. Schmitt. His staunchly anti-historicist/positivist approach is itself a corrective to historians such as Saltman

<sup>3</sup> *Petri Venerabilis: Aduersus Iudeorum inueteratam duritiem*, ed. by Yvonne Friedman, CCCM, 58 (1985).

<sup>4</sup> *The Works of Gilbert Crispin*, ed. by Anna Sapir Abulafia and Gillian R. Evans, Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi, 8 (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1986), p. xxvii. and also Abulafia's 'The *ars disputandi* of Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster (1085–117)', in her *Christians and Jews in Dispute: Disputational Literature and the Rise of Anti-Judaism in the West (c. 1000–1150)*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, CS621 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), essay 6.

<sup>5</sup> See Gilbert Dahan, *The Christian Polemic against the Jews in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Jody Gladding (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), pp. 61–62. See also Richard W. Hunt, 'The Disputation of Peter of Cornwall Against Symon the Jew', in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to Frederick Maurice Powicke*, ed. by Richard W. Hunt and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), pp. 143–56.

<sup>6</sup> See Odo of Tournai, 'On Original Sin' and 'A Disputation with the Jew, Leo, Concerning the Advent of Christ, the Son of God', trans., intro., and notes by Irvén M. Resnick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 29–30.

<sup>7</sup> See Abulafia, 'The Ideology of Reform and the Jews', in *Christians and Jews in Dispute*, essay 15, pp. 52–53.

and Niemeyer, whose chief question about the supposed autobiography was 'Vérité ou fiction?'<sup>8</sup> While not ruling out the possibility that it drew upon the experiences of one or more Jewish converts, Schmitt prefers to examine the text from the point of view of autobiography, dreams, images, and the nature and process of conversion.<sup>9</sup> His conclusion (like that of Abulafia) is that the text is ultimately shaped to the needs of the canons of Cappenberg, and, presumably, by them.<sup>10</sup> Several decades later Hildegard von Bingen is described as holding discussions with Jews at Rupertsberg, among other spiritual seekers who came to visit her. According to her biographers, 'Even Jews came to visit her to ask her questions. Refuted concerning their own Law, she exhorted them to the Christian faith with words of pious admonition.'<sup>11</sup>

We may conclude then, with Schmitt, that the important question to ask about such debates is not whether they were real or not, but what we can learn from a close reading of them. At the very least they represent Christians' answers to what they thought were Jewish objections to their faith and seem, at this stage, to be less exercises in proselytizing than in Christian apologetics for a Christian audience. In the recent literature on this large subject various questions have been asked in accordance with this general understanding. For example, was the position of the Jewish participant representative of contemporary Jewish thought or rather a Christian version of what Jews were imagined to think? What do they show about the Christian author's attitude to the Jews and, in particular, did what might be seen as the advances of the twelfth-century renaissance (humanism broadly conceived) have a negative impact on twelfth-century Jews and ultimately on their descendants?

Despite the various answers to the questions outlined above it is generally accepted that the position of Jews within Western Europe took a turn for the worse in the twelfth century. The reasons for the change in attitude on the part

<sup>8</sup> Avrom Saltman, 'Hermann's *Opusculum de conversione sua*: Truth or Fiction?', *Revue des études juives*, 147 (1988), 31–56. *Hermannus quondam Judaeus, Opusculum de Conversione sua*, ed. by Gerlinde Niemeyer, MGH, Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, 4 (Weimar: Böhlau Nachfolger, 1963).

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Claude Schmitt, *La Conversion d'Hermann le juif: autobiographie, histoire et fiction* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), pp. 238–39.

<sup>10</sup> Schmitt, *La Conversion*, p. 273.

<sup>11</sup> 'Sed et Iudeos, dum ad se uenirent causa interrogationis, conuictos de lege sua ad Christi fidem exhortabatur uerbis pie admonitionis': *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis*, ed. by Monika Klaes, CCCM, 126 (1993), bk II, chap. 4, p. 26.

of Christians which led to this deterioration — sometimes characterized as a change from simple anti-Judaism to incipient anti-Semitism — have been variously canvassed.<sup>12</sup> According to Michael Signer in the conclusion to his collection *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, one recurring theme in the essays was that of ‘anxiety or doubt’, which he links with the seminal works of Abulafia, Moore, and Langmuir on the subject.

### *Doubt and the Jews*

If we consider that doubt had been in some sense beneficial in opening up new fields of intellectual endeavour in the period (even if in a somewhat limited way) this chapter has to deal with ‘the downside of doubt’, that is, its implications for the formation of repressive attitudes — and most notoriously such attitudes in relation to the Jews.<sup>13</sup>

An examination of the three writers mentioned by Signer reveals that their explanations of the causes of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism are as different as their understandings, or perhaps their unexamined assumptions about, the nature of doubt. As we have seen ‘doubt’ could cover a range of cognitive attitudes from near assent or belief, through uncertainty to denial or disbelief. For Abulafia, it is not so much doubt, in the sense of uncertainty, as denial which comes into play. She argues that the twelfth-century renaissance, with its emphasis on reason as the defining characteristic of humanity, led to the dehumanizing of those who were seen to be without reason (i.e., the Jews) and contributed significantly to their exclusion from Christian society.<sup>14</sup>

This view is largely persuasive, although despite Abulafia’s dismissal of Langmuir’s definition of ‘rationality’ as ahistorical,<sup>15</sup> her own characterization of

<sup>12</sup> See Anna Sapir Abulafia, ‘From Northern Europe to Southern Europe and from the General to the Particular: Recent Research on Jewish-Christian Coexistence in Medieval Europe’, *Journal of Medieval History*, 23 (1997), 179–90.

<sup>13</sup> Why this attitude should not have extended equally to other non-Christian groups such as the Muslims is also the subject of debate. See *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, ed. by John Victor Tolan (New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> This is most strongly argued in Anna Sapir Abulafia’s book *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1995). See also the preface to her collected essays, *Christians and Jews in Dispute*, pp. ix–xiv, and essay 14, ‘Twelfth-Century Humanism and the Jews’.

<sup>15</sup> ‘To them reason was an innate human capacity to perceive truth, and as such it would probably have to be placed for much of the time in Langmuir’s category of nonrational thought.

the 'stoic concept of reason' as new (or perhaps newly dominant) in the twelfth century also needs further examination. Certainly her claim that '[r]eason became the intuitive faculty capable of grasping the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth' would probably not have been accepted even by Abelard.<sup>16</sup> Moreover we find that Peter the Venerable, whose readiness to dehumanize the Jews is most marked among twelfth-century polemicists, actually refers to a *biblical* passage to back this up, rather than relying on the new humanism.<sup>17</sup>

For R. I. Moore, anxiety (which is often found as a concomitant of doubt but can arise in other circumstances) is more salient. He claims that the newly minted class of *literati*, in order to defend their own position, had to marginalize potential rivals, which included the Jews. The disadvantaged Jewish minority might sound an unlikely threat, but he points out, inter alia, that Jews ran the papal household throughout the twelfth century.<sup>18</sup>

However, it was Gavin Langmuir who did more than anyone else to try to explain where and how anti-Judaism became anti-Semitism and the role that doubt played in the process, a theory that he developed and revised in various writings over several decades.<sup>19</sup> Langmuir's approach to the problem is partly theoretical and partly elaborated with reference to the attitudes of key twelfth-century figures. My investigation will follow his lead.

But to do so would be to obscure a major feature of twelfth-century thought, as the protagonists of that thinking saw it, for the sake of Langmuir's perception of what kind of thinking is universally acceptable to historians today' (Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, p. 6).

<sup>16</sup> Abulafia, 'Twelfth-Century Humanism and the Jews', p. 173. What she might have meant was that it became the faculty capable of grasping 'the necessity for' such mysteries, since reason had long been recognized as the aspect of the mind that was used to judge truth or falsity in arguments.

<sup>17</sup> See below, p. 172.

<sup>18</sup> R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987). He calls them 'clerici' in his later paper, 'Antisemitism and the Birth of Europe' in *Christianity and Judaism*, ed. by Diana Wood, Studies in Church History, 29 (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 33–57.

<sup>19</sup> See Gavin Langmuir's *Comment* in AHR forum, *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), 614–24; *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); *History, Religion and Antisemitism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); 'The Faith of Christians and Hostility to Jews', in *Christianity and Judaism*, pp. 77–93; 'At the Frontiers of Faith', in *Religious Violence between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives*, ed. by Anna Sapir Abulafia (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 138–56.

### *Langmuir's Theory of Doubt*

In his examination of anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages, Langmuir claims to have identified a change in the nature of doubt among Christians occurring somewhere around the eleventh century. He puts it down to 'a new emphasis on empirical knowledge as well as logic'.<sup>20</sup> He believed that this 'new kind of doubt made Jewish disbelief more menacing and, for the first time, drove some Christians to the verge of irrationality when they thought about Jews'. Here Langmuir takes the core notion of doubt itself as relatively unproblematic (although he spends a lot of time elaborating different *kinds* of doubt), without investigating its connection to other related concepts either in terms of modern analytic philosophy or how it was understood by twelfth-century thinkers.<sup>21</sup>

What Langmuir counts as doubt (or doubts) seems more nebulous than the cases I have examined in earlier chapters. My cases involve doubts about some particular proposition, or a state of affairs that is explicitly recognized and indeed expressed by the writer rather than any general state of uncertainty or feelings of doubt which might be attributed to them. More confusingly, Langmuir sometimes seems to identify such doubt with its *causes* where he defines 'doubts' (*sic*) as 'consciousness of conflicts between beliefs and between beliefs and knowledge'.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand it sometimes seems to be an almost unconscious/subconscious experience of such conflicts. In this connection Langmuir sometimes seems to imply that if the conflicting beliefs are not examined and the status quo somehow regained, that is, if the conflict is not resolved, it will be projected onto some other

<sup>20</sup> Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, L. Jonathan Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) and D. S. Clarke 'Does Acceptance Entail Belief?', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 31 (1994), 145–56. Abulafia concentrates on Langmuir's conception of 'reason' and finds it wanting, rather than on his scarcely elaborated understanding of 'doubt', for example, 'When faith is affirmed in words, it becomes belief, and the obverse of belief is doubt or disbelief' (Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, p. 100).

<sup>22</sup> Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, p. 233. The word *conflict* here presumably refers to competing truth-claims: belief A and belief B cannot both be true because they contradict each other; or belief B cannot be true because it conflicts with the knowledge that C (where knowledge is taken as 'true belief'). It is true that if people feel the need to maintain beliefs they recognize as conflicting, a state of anxiety may be induced which may lead them to doubt the truth of any or all of the competing beliefs. How people went about ridding themselves of doubts about particular kinds of belief is examined in Chapters 2 and 3, above. We saw that a variety of means was used, among which empirical observation did not figure prominently.



object — in this case, the Jews.<sup>23</sup> But even if we grant that this is a tenable psychological theory there are still problems.<sup>24</sup>

As part of his general account, Langmuir's examination of medieval doubt depends on distinguishing 'different modes of thinking', specifically, 'rational empirical' (or simply 'rational'), 'non-rational', and 'irrational'. Different forms of doubt are then associated with these different 'forms of thinking'.<sup>25</sup> Briefly put, 'rational (empirical) thinking' seems to be reasoning from empirically observable premisses; 'non-rational thinking' 'embraces a multitude of very different kinds of realities at once in fluid interaction'. The example he gives of non-rational thinking is poetry, specifically 'Solomon's "Song of Songs" and the fascinating religious interpretations of it'.<sup>26</sup> If these two kinds of thinking co-exist happily together then 'individuals feel comfortably integrated in themselves and in relation to the realities that impinge on them'. But what interests Langmuir in this context is a third kind of doubt which arises when such non-rational beliefs clash with rational/empirical knowledge of how things work in the world. He writes that

if individuals become aware of a conflict between what they believe and what they know or could know if they used their capacity to think rationally and empirically, doubts will disturb their peace of mind. When faced with such conflicts, 'rational' people will reexamine their beliefs and their knowledge and modify them so that they can regain their ability to move freely between nonrational and rational thinking. In some individuals, however, that awareness may induce irrationality, the preservation of belief by the suppression or compartmentalization of their capacity to think rationally and empirically about segments of reality and the projection of those realities of associations created by their nonrational thinking.<sup>27</sup>

There is something odd about this classification in that 'irrational thinking' is not some primary mode of thought (like 'rational empirical' or 'non-rational') but a failure to apply rational thinking in certain contexts. Furthermore we are not told why some people are able to readjust their thinking successfully and others become irrational.

<sup>23</sup> Langmuir's theoretical discussion has to be augmented by what he says in the particular cases he examines.

<sup>24</sup> It shares the same sort of problem with the concept of 'low self-esteem' as a much-favoured contemporary explanation of antisocial behaviour and aggressiveness in males, etc., not to mention any number of Freudian psychological explanations.

<sup>25</sup> Apparently these different modes of thought are meant to be universally recognizable/applicable and have been employed (in various proportions) in different societies throughout history.

<sup>26</sup> Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, p. 152.

<sup>27</sup> Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism*, pp. 156–57.

Langmuir suggests that the increasing incidence of rejection of the sacraments by heretical groups during the twelfth century arose from such 'rational empirical' doubts. He does not explore the possibility that the sacraments were rejected because of increasing antisacerdotalism, stemming from the perceived unworthiness of those performing the sacrament, rather than from doubt about the claims made for the sacrament itself, as being the actual body and blood of Christ when to all external evidence (empirical/rational) it was simply bread and wine.<sup>28</sup>

In a similar way the physical presence of Jews in the midst of Christendom who held out against the promised global expansion of Christianity throughout the centuries is taken to have caused doubts for Christians about the validity of their own faith. Langmuir makes this case specifically in connection with Peter the Venerable, Abbot of Cluny from 1122 to 1156.

### *Peter the Venerable*

In assessing the persuasiveness of Langmuir's argument we first need to show that Peter the Venerable actually had the doubts Langmuir wishes to attribute to him. It may be noted that Peter did not figure among the examples of those who admitted to various kinds of spiritual doubt in Chapter 4. There is a danger of circularity here too. It is pretty clear that Peter was hostile towards Jews, and Langmuir's assumption is that this was because of his doubts. But even if we were to find convincing evidence that Peter doubted, such hostility is not necessarily the result of such doubt. There are numerous other factors that might have caused hostility towards Jews and many have been suggested in the literature of anti-Semitism. Among them are envy (of the perceived wealth of Jews or their special treatment by rulers); anger or resentment at their part in the Crucifixion; increased emphasis on the humanity of Christ, and so on.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The Eucharistic miracle performed at Soissons, mentioned in Guibert de Nogent's, *De sanctis et eorum pigneribus*, was interpreted in just this manner by the author of the *Vita Norberti Archiepiscopi Magdeburgensis*, ed. by Roger Wilmans, MGH SS, 12, pp. 663–706. He writes that when the Council of Soissons in 1121 decreed that people were not to attend masses by married priests, the prohibition gave rise to the mistaken notion that conversion of the bread and wine would not take place when such priests were officiating. The miracle in which the boy sees the priest (*sacerdos unus de uxoratis*) holding the Christ child in the altar cloth serves to counter such 'haeresum occasiones' (p. 681).

<sup>29</sup> See Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth Century Renaissance*, especially chap. 9, 'Inclusiveness and Exclusion'.

But let us turn to Langmuir's argument. He begins by sketching Peter the Venerable's career, from his formation as novice and monk 'in a demanding but highly protected and indoctrinating atmosphere' until he rose, in 1122, to become Abbot of Cluny, 'the greatest monastery in Latin Christendom'. Yet Peter apparently only enjoyed the triumphalism of his own position and that of the Church for about a decade. Thenceforth Langmuir sees Peter's polemical career as one of increasing desperation. Thus solid confidence in his faith and in the success of Christendom is demonstrated in his first treatise, written in 1132 against a monk of Cluny who had been tempted by the Apollinarian heresy.<sup>30</sup> This mood of confidence is maintained in his letter to a supporter of the antipope Anacletus between 1130 and 1134.<sup>31</sup>

Things start to deteriorate with the 'radical challenge of Peter of Bruys and Henry of Le Mans' (1139) to belief in the usefulness of churches, masses, and prayers for the dead. Peter wrote his first major theological treatise to counter their heresy.<sup>32</sup> He was next confronted by dissension from some of his own monks who claimed that Jesus never said he was God in the Gospels.<sup>33</sup> By the time he came to write his treatise against the Jews c. 1144–47 the situation of the Church and Christendom<sup>34</sup> in general had received several blows, not least the loss of Edessa in 1144, which led to Pope Eugenius III's call for the Second Crusade. Peter's final work, prompted by earlier visits to Spain (1126 and 1141), was against the Saracens.<sup>35</sup>

Thus Langmuir concludes when it came to Peter's treatise against the Jews, 'He wanted to demonstrate rationally and empirically that Judaism was false and that his own faith was true, and since that was impossible, his arguments verged

<sup>30</sup> That is, a denial of the complete manhood of Christ. See Letter 37 in *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, ed. by Giles Constable, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967). The intemperate description of the monk's 'bestialis insipientia profunda stultitia et omnimoda ineruditia' might be noted here. Constable says that the date of the letter (1130–32) is conjecture (II, 125).

<sup>31</sup> *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, Letter 40, pp. 134–36, to Cardinal Bishop Aegidius (Gilo) of Tusculum.

<sup>32</sup> Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, p. 198. *Contra Petrobrusianos haereticos*, ed. by James Fearn, CCCM, 10 (1968).

<sup>33</sup> *Contra eos qui dicunt*, in PL, CLXXXIX, col. 487.

<sup>34</sup> Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, p. 197

<sup>35</sup> For the dating of Peter's polemical works see Yvonne Friedman's introduction to *Petri Venerabilis Adversus Iudeorum inueteratam duritiem*, CCCM, 58 (1985).

on irrationality.<sup>36</sup> Here several elements have to be distinguished: first, evidence of Peter's pre-existing and increasing doubts; second, evidence for his attitudes towards contemporary Jews; third, evidence for 'irrational' thought with regard to Jews, as a precursor of anti-Semitism, as opposed to simple anti-Judaism. Langmuir sees in Peter's writing career an ever-growing impulse to prove the truth of the Christian faith in response to increasingly radical doubts about it, or attacks upon it.<sup>37</sup> Although Peter himself claims that such polemical works are to aid the faith of others (and his contemporaries took him at his word),<sup>38</sup> Langmuir tends to play down the external reasons for their production and suggests that it was, in fact, his own subjective doubts that Peter needed put to rest.

### *'De miraculis'*

Langmuir seems to think that a passage from Peter's *De miraculis* will prove the point that Peter had lingering doubts about his faith.<sup>39</sup> In 1145, Peter left Cluny for Rome, shortly after the death of the Prior of Charlieu, Guillaume de Roanne. The prior was not a popular figure and it was suspected that his death was due to poison, though the matter had not been settled before the departure of Peter, who says that he left 'doubting and anxious concerning such a wicked crime'.<sup>40</sup> In Rome Peter had an encounter with the dead prior which he included in his book of miracles. He recalls how when he was staying 'at the Church of Santa Maria Nuova close by the temple of Romulus', Prior Guillaume appeared to be standing

<sup>36</sup> Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, p. 206.

<sup>37</sup> In his most sustained analysis of the process, found in Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, p. 197–208, seems to be arguing that Peter's writings show a decline in confidence in the prophecy from Ps. 72 (Vulgate 71). 8 ('and he shall have dominion from sea to sea') about the universal dominion of Christianity, though in later versions it seems rather to be the 'truth' of the Christian faith more generally that is in question.

<sup>38</sup> Peter of Poitiers: 'You are the only one of our generation who, with the sword of Divine words, slaughtered the three greatest enemies of holy Christianity, the Jews, the heretics and the Saracens [...] in order to humble the satanic pride and arrogance which rise up against the greatness of God'; quoted by Friedman in *Aduersos Iudeorum*, p. vii.

<sup>39</sup> It occurs in Book II, Chapter 25, of *Petri Cluniacensis Abbatis De Miraculis Libri Duo*, ed. by Dyonisia Bouthillier, CCCM, 83 (1988), pp. 142–46.

<sup>40</sup> 'Ita interim de tam nephanda re anxius et dubius, propositum iter incepti': *De miraculis*, bk II, chap. 25, p. 144.

beside him while he slept'.<sup>41</sup> Knowing that he had to act quickly, since the dead did not tarry long in conversation with the living, Peter asks his visitor four questions, which he assures us were quite unpremeditated. They were: 'How are you?' 'Do you now see the Lord?'; 'Isn't what we believe about God certain, isn't the faith we hold true without doubt?'; and the fourth, 'Is it true, as rumour has it and many think that certain people not unknown to you killed you by deceit and poison?' To which the answers, since the prior was a man of few words (although prone to repeat himself) were: 'I am very well, I am very well'; 'I see him constantly, I see him constantly'; 'Nothing is so true, nothing is so certain'; and finally, 'It is true, it is true'.<sup>42</sup>

Peter's third question stands out among the more direct enquiries about the circumstances of Guillaume's death and postmortem state. Perhaps this anomaly, together with the fact that Peter claims the questions just popped into his mind when confronted by the deceased prior, suggested to Langmuir that these were previously unacknowledged doubts. Of course, this assumes that Peter is accurately reporting a dream he really had, rather than inventing one or working over some other experience. These particular questions may have been previously unformulated by Peter, but he himself admits that he had been 'doubtful and anxious' about the prior's case for some time.<sup>43</sup>

To see what Peter is doing here we have to go back to the beginning of the chapter where he makes his excuses for including a dream or sleeping vision in his collection of miracles, on the grounds that dreams are often 'false or

<sup>41</sup> '[A]pud cardinalatum Sancte Marie Noue, quod iuxta antiquum Romuli templum constructum est, hospicium suscepi. Ibi dum nocte quadam quiescerem, ecce uir uenerande uite domnus Willelmus qui nuper de uita excesserat michi dormienti uisus est in somnis astare': *De miraculis*, bk II, chap. 25, pp. 142–43.

<sup>42</sup> '[S]tatim menti occurrit, non posse mortuum diu cum uiuente morari, nec prolixum sermonem miscere [...] nequaquam prius premeditatus [...]. Quatuor ergo quedam, que nescio unde dormienti occurebant interrogando ei proposui. "Quomodo inquam uobis est, domne prior?" [...] Ad quod ille breuiter ut fuerat semper breuiloquus, ac bis vel ter ex more uerba replicans, respondit: "Multum ait michi bene est, multum michi bene est." [...] "Vidistis adhuc dominum?" Et ille: "Assidue uideo, assidue uideo." [...] "Estne inquam certum quod de Deo credimus, estne absque dubitatione uera fides quam tenemus?" "Nichil ait ita uerum, nichil ita certum; [...]" "Verum est aio quod fama refert, uerum est quod multi opinantur, quosdam quos ipse non ignoratis, fraude sua ac ueneficio uos occidisse?" "Verum est inquit, uerum est": *De miraculis*, bk II, chap. 25, pp. 144–45.

<sup>43</sup> This might have been taken by Langmuir to suggest that Peter was also 'doubtful and anxious' about the faith, but he does not explicitly make this point.

doubtful' — 'falsa [...] aut dubia'. Visions experienced by people in a waking state (the majority in his book of miracles) were one thing, but visions experienced by sleepers (i.e., dreams) were another, no doubt for the reasons canvassed above in Chapter 3.<sup>44</sup> Possibly, his reason for suggesting that he had not been thinking of the questions that suddenly came to him was the well-known fact that what was preoccupying the dreamer while awake might resurface in sleep, thus arguing against a supernatural source for the experience.

Peter makes a significant comment on the general usefulness of recounting such visions in Chapter 8 of Book I:

I think the narration of such things not unwelcome to readers, especially for those who disdain the present for love of the future life and strive to reach it with true belief and works of piety. It is a great relaxation for them and an immense consolation in the miserable present in which they are daily enmeshed, when they hear something of the homeland from which they are exiled on this pilgrimage, and for which they may sigh with open mouths, and which excites their faith and hope more and more.<sup>45</sup>

Thus the assurance of the truth of the faith (or some aspects of it, namely those which can only be understood in the presence of God — which is the point of asking whether that is, in fact, Guillaume's current location — can be understood in this more general pastoral context, rather than, as Langmuir suggests, for the express purpose of quieting Peter's own conscious or unconscious doubts.

In this case, even though it was a dream, Peter claims to be perfectly satisfied about the authenticity of the vision, mainly because it was proved by the subsequent confession of the poisoner. Consequently he should also have been satisfied by the assurances it contained, both concerning Guillaume and about the faith in general.<sup>46</sup> Yet Langmuir maintains that he was a man possessed by doubt.

<sup>44</sup> Peter addresses the topic, in a cautious manner, in a letter to his brother Eustace, *The Letters*, Letter 160, p. 387: 'Nam si uisio quam priori fratri tuo scripsisti uera est, et aliquid significans, aut forte uera et nichil praesignans, non inuenieris apud deum contemptor uerorum.'

<sup>45</sup> 'Horum namque multa est recreatio, et in miseriis presentibus in quibus quotidie ingemiscunt maxima consolatio, quando de patria a qua in hac peregrinatione exulant, et ad quam inhiante suspirant, aliquid quod eorum fidem ac spem magis ac magis excitet, audiunt': *De miraculis*, bk 1, chap. 9, p. 35.

<sup>46</sup> Empirical fact authenticating supernatural occurrences is common. There are several examples in Peter's own book. For example, Book I, Chapter 10, where believers and sceptics alike await the predicted death of the brother involved (he died). In the *Vita Norberti* after St Gereon's body has been miraculously located by St Norbert, the martyr's identity is proved by comparing the wounds to his head with the written account of the way he was killed (p. 682).

*‘Aduersus Iudeorum inueteratam duritiem’*

But if the evidence for Peter’s doubt is equivocal (or I would prefer to say ‘non-proven’), no one could deny that in his treatise, *Against the Inveterate Stubbornness of the Jews*, Peter shows himself to be a particularly rabid apologist for Christianity at a time when anti-Judaic invective was the norm. Two particular aspects have been singled out for comment, doubtless on account of their baleful resonances through succeeding centuries: the suggestion that Jews are less than human, and the denigration of their post-biblical writings.

Let us consider the first of these, the suggestion that since Jews cannot grasp the truth of Christianity (or more specifically assent to his argument from the miracle of the spontaneous reignition of the Holy Sepulchre lamp), they are in fact not human, but animals. He writes:

Why [O Jew] should you not be called a senseless animal, why not a brute beast, why not a beast of burden? Compare yourself to cattle, or if you prefer, the ass, which is the most stupid of all such beasts, and at the same time compare the things which should be listened to [...] what distinguishes your hearing from that of an ass? The ass hears and does not understand, the Jew hears and does not understand.<sup>47</sup>

Peter’s conclusion, according to Langmuir, is not just hate-filled but an example of irrational thought, since it flies in the face of what he takes to be observable fact, namely that Jews are not brute beasts but human.<sup>48</sup>

But we need to examine in more depth how Peter comes to this disturbing conclusion and the place it has in his overall argument in the treatise. As Friedman points out, the work was apparently written in a couple of different versions (or stages): ‘as four short chapters and three supplements — “on the precepts”, “on the miracles”, and “against the Talmud”’. The scope of these supplements exceeds

<sup>47</sup> ‘Cur enim non dicaris animal brutum, cur non bestia, cur non iumentum? Adhibe tecum bouem, uel si mauis asinum quo nichil in pecoribus stolidus est, et simul cum eo quaecumque possunt auscultare. Quid referet, quid distabit inter auditum tuum et asini? Audiet nec intelliget asinus, audiet nec intelliget Iudeus’: *Aduersus Iudeorum*, bk v, p. 125. Actually there is worse to come where, on the basis of myths from the Talmud, Peter says, ‘Produco igitur portentuosam bestiam de cubili suo, et eam in theatro totius mundi, in conspectu omnium populorum ridendam propono’ (bk v, p. 125), although this does rather suggest that his language is more figurative than literal.

<sup>48</sup> Though, of course, if Peter was prepared to accept transubstantiation (and I do not think that Langmuir would demur at this) what is to say that Jews were not somehow essentially animals with the appearance of humans? On the question of how literally we are to take this language, see Jonathan M. Elukin, ‘The Discovery of the Self: Jews and Conversion in the Twelfth Century’, in *Jews and Christians* (see n. 1, above), pp. 63–76 (p. 76 n. 27).



the original framework. These supplements triple the size of the book as it was originally conceived and also change the contents of the *Contra Iudeos*.<sup>49</sup> In terms of chronology,

The first three chapters and the first part of the present Chapter IV were completed by 1144. It is likely that the book was first circulated in this form. Subsequently he added: a) the first section on the precepts and the miracles; b) the second section until the end of the fourth chapter; and c) Chapter V, with its virulent attack on the Talmud. The whole work was then reissued circa 1147.<sup>50</sup>

It should be noted that this was after Peter had his vision of Prior Guillaume as a result of which any doubts he might have harboured concerning the faith should have been eliminated.

Peter begins his treatise in the traditional manner, marshalling Old Testament passages which Christians took to be prophecies of Christ. Here he adds nothing new and as might be expected decides that these will not convince his Jewish hearers.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the reason for going over this familiar ground may well be, as is frequently supposed, to bolster the debating skills of less able Christians. Langmuir characterizes the change of tack that occurs in Chapter 4 as follows:

Almost all of the first four chapters is devoted to proving Christ's divinity by certain Old Testament passages. But at the end of the fourth chapter, as if acknowledging the inconclusiveness of the prior arguments, Peter suddenly introduces a strikingly new kind of argument to clinch his case, an empirical analysis of the roots of faith.<sup>52</sup>

Peter's statement that belief stems from authority, reason, miracle, force, or voluptuousness or some combination of them is indeed unusual. It seems to be based on his impressions of some of the religions he knew about. He had been to Spain and seen Islam in action and had also had the Koran translated in order to study it. Having discarded force and voluptuousness (Islam) and decided that authority will not do as a basis of faith unless the authority is already accepted as such, and that reason will not produce faith by itself, he is left with miracle. Nonetheless, reason also plays some part in this explanation since reason has to recognize that

<sup>49</sup> *Aduersus Iudeorum*, p. lxvii.

<sup>50</sup> *Aduersus Iudeorum*, p. lxx.

<sup>51</sup> See *Aduersus Iudeorum*, p. ix, on Peter's sources.

<sup>52</sup> Langmuir, 'Peter the Venerable', p. 206. While these conclusions (or premisses) may be based on Peter's experience of the regions he has visited and their different faiths, it would have to be called 'anecdotal' rather than 'empirical' in any scientific sense. We might compare here Peter Abelard's observation in *Collationes*, 1. 7, p. 8, p. 10, that most people are content to follow the faith of those who bring them up.



the event in question is indeed a miracle, which also implies something about its source.

With the ground rules now established to his own satisfaction and with only some token objections raised and answered on behalf of the Jews, Peter proceeds to his clinching argument.<sup>53</sup> He enumerates miracles connected with the Incarnation, starting with those performed by Christ himself and the disciples, martyrs, confessors, and members of monastic orders and hermits, and mentions the healing miracles occurring in churches (including those dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary whom Jews hold, he says, in especial odium). He goes on to say that had miracles in the past (*antiqua*) been lacking (which they had not) there are quite enough in modern times (*moderno tempore*) to sustain the faith.<sup>54</sup>

Still, he recognizes, somewhat grudgingly, that the Jew might be sceptical of miracles within the tradition proclaimed by Christians<sup>55</sup> and concludes: 'You have heard of the miracles of Christ's disciples, you have heard of the miracles of Christ's mother, you have heard of the miracles of Christ's Cross, now hear of the sublime miracle of Christ's Sepulchre.'<sup>56</sup> He goes on to claim that this knock-down miracle, the annual rekindling of the holy fire at the Sepulchre in Jerusalem, is attested by Saracens and pagans and concludes, 'So Jew, if you deny what the Christians claim about such a great miracle, how can you deny what all the pagans [...] and Saracens confirm for you?'<sup>57</sup>

The question of why this has not converted the Saracens and pagans may then occur to the reader. Perhaps it was because they had not been sufficiently instructed as to its importance in the context of Judaeo-Christian tradition. To put the miracle in context he recapitulates various acceptable offerings in the

<sup>53</sup> Of course the same is true for some 'debates' written by Christians, but Peter's tract is even more perfunctory.

<sup>54</sup> 'Fugiant mentem multiplicia Christi miracula moderno tempore facta tantaque ut si etiam antiqua deessent, ad integrum Christianae fidei robur sufficere possent': *Aduersus Iudeorum*, bk IV, p. 121.

<sup>55</sup> He introduces an interesting argument against the Apostles being mere magicians, namely that the study of magic is a long process and they would not have had time to get it up in the space of Jesus's brief ministry.

<sup>56</sup> 'Audisti miracula discipulorum Christi, audisti miracula Matris Christi, audisti miracula crucis Christi, audi et sublime miraculum sepulchri Christi': *Aduersus Iudeorum*, bk IV, p. 122.

<sup>57</sup> 'Si negaueris ergo, Iudae, quod de hoc tanto miraculo fatentur Christiani, nunquid negare poteris, quod inde confirmant totius orientis tibi ac meridiei ethnici ac Sarraceni?': *Aduersus Iudeorum*, bk IV, p. 123.

Bible (Abel, not Cain; the sacrifice of Elias, not Baal), making the point that God has acknowledged Jesus Christ as an offering and not the offerings of the Jews.<sup>58</sup> Peter thus ends his chapter, and originally the entire work, with the assertion that he has proved Jesus to be the Son of God with all that entails:

Recognize as proved, hold as certain, that Christ our Lord is the Son of God not by adoption but essentially, not called God but truly God, that his kingdom is not temporal but eternal, not as he who has not yet come and is awaited but as he who has already come at the appointed time to be received and adored.<sup>59</sup>

Thus the Jew has no right of reply to this triumphal statement.

But some time later, possibly as a result of the heightened atmosphere of antagonism surrounding the failure of the Second Crusade, Peter added a fifth book, entitled *De ridiculis et stultissimis fabulis Iudeorum*. This attack on the capacities and indeed the morality of contemporary Jews in the light of their post-biblical literature, notably the Talmud, is one of the first in an increasingly dangerous trend for Jewish-Christian relations.<sup>60</sup> His first charge is that Jews cannot grasp the rational arguments he has made for Christianity in the first four books:

Whence despite the fact that it is clearly proven that you are cattle or beasts from these sacred authorities, and it has been sufficiently demonstrated by me in the preceding four chapters, you are unmoved by these things, a fifth chapter is now added, in which it will be brought to light not only to Christians but made clear to the whole world that you are cattle and in affirming it I will not exceed the bounds of truth even a bit.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> 'Sic plane, sic, o Iudee, hoc nostro tempore idem Deus Iudeorum uota et Christianorum sacrificia discernit. Reprobat hostias uestras, quas iam per longissimum tempus nec esse permisit, suscipit holocaustum Christianum, quando locum illum, in quo quondam mortuus iacuit, agnus ille, qui semetipsum optulit immaculatum Deo, tantis ignis diuini miraculis annuo recursu honorat': *Aduersus Iudeorum*, bk IV, p. 124.

<sup>59</sup> '[A]gnosce probatum esse, tene certum esse Christum Dominum nostrum non adoptiuum sed essentialem esse Dei filium, non nuncupatium sed uerum esse Deum, non temporalem sed regem esse aeternum, non quasi eum qui nondum uenerit expectandum, sed sicut eum qui iam praescripto tempore uenit suscipiendum et adorandum': *Aduersus Iudeorum*, bk IV, p. 124.

<sup>60</sup> Such information seems (not surprisingly) first to have appeared in the dialogue of the Jewish convert, Peter Alfonsi. How far Peter the Venerable's work was directly responsible for increasing awareness of post-biblical Jewish literature is questionable since it does not seem to have circulated widely and is extant in only four copies. On this see Anna Sapir Abulafia, 'The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism', a review of Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), in Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in Dispute*, essay 2.

<sup>61</sup> 'Vnde quamuis te iumentum uel bestiam esse hiis sacris auctoritatibus [Ps. 48. 21] plene probatum sit, quamuis hoc in praecedentibus quatuor capitulis, etsi tu hiis motus non es, a me

He goes on to hold up the anthropomorphic treatment of God and the fables about the prophets found in the Talmud as the height of blasphemy, falsity, and perfidiousness.<sup>62</sup> The Jews are also shown to be witless in believing such fables, which, he says though ‘fabricated with such great and protracted labour could deceive or take in with their complete lack of substance no one except a Jew, like the merest fly’.

### *Peter and the Jews*

But how much of this is related to spiritual doubt? Could there be other reasons for his particular animosity? Further evidence of Peter’s relationship to and thoughts about contemporary Jews are found in his letter to Louis VII, where he recommends they be despoiled of their ill-gotten gains. He writes: ‘If the Saracens are to be detested [...] how much more are the Jews to be execrated and hated who, feeling nothing at all for Christ or the Christian faith, reject, blaspheme, and ridicule the virgin birth and all the sacraments of human redemption?’<sup>63</sup>

Such are the theological reasons, but Peter also draws attention to their invidious position within Christian society as moneylenders. This was no doubt a sore point with Peter, since during his time at Cluny its financial position had become increasingly difficult. Whether he actually borrowed money from the Jews is still the subject of debate. He notes in general the lamentable circumstance where sacred vessels of the Church are in the unclean hands of the Jews as pledges and hints that they are subjected to ritual desecrations.<sup>64</sup> This state of affairs, combining anxieties about money, uncleanness, and obligations to an already

sufficenter ostensum sit, addatur tamen et quantum capitulum, quo in lucem producto non solum Christianis, sed et toti terrarum orbi patefiat te uere iumentum esse, nec me, dum istud affirmo, ueritatis limitem uel in modico excessisse’: *Aduersus Iudeorum*, bk v, p. 125.

<sup>62</sup> For a chilling indication of the persistence of such inflammatory libels see <<http://www.stormfront.org/jewish/talmud.html>>. Stormfront is a white supremacist organisation whose motto is ‘White pride world wide’. (This particular URL has disappeared since I accessed it in 2006; however, an equally repugnant example can be found at <[http://www.jesus-is-saviour.com/FALSE%20religions/Judaism/talmud\\_child\\_sex.htm](http://www.jesus-is-saviour.com/FALSE%20religions/Judaism/talmud_child_sex.htm)> [accessed 4 January 2008]).

<sup>63</sup> ‘Si detestandi sunt Sarraceni [...] quantum execrandi et odio habendi sunt Iudaei, qui nichil prorsus de Christo uel fide Christiana sentientes, ipsum uirgineum partum, cunctaque redemptionis humanae sacramenta abiiciunt, blasphemant, subsannant?’. *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, Letter 130, p. 328.

<sup>64</sup> *The Letters of Peter the Venerable*, Letter 130, p. 329.

suspect group, would surely be enough to harden Peter's attitude toward the Jews, regardless of their supposed threat to the Church triumphant.<sup>65</sup>

So does Peter's polemical career indicate that he actually suffered from doubt himself or that he was, as he and contemporaries claimed, arguing to strengthen the faith of others?<sup>66</sup> What Langmuir sees as evidence of more and more radical doubt could equally be seen as Peter's growing confidence in taking on all comers, culminating with his arguments to trounce those most difficult opponents — the Jews and Saracens.

Moreover, since he rightly understands that Jews will hardly be convinced by arguments which themselves presuppose the truth of Christianity, or depend on Christian interpretations of Old Testament prophecies, his final use of 'a rational argument about observable events' is entirely proper. Nor is it an example of an inappropriate reliance on empirical proof, or even of some change in the nature of thought and hence of doubt occurring around the twelfth century. Indeed if it were true that the reignition of the fire at the Holy Sepulchre were a miracle (something that Peter claims is recognized by non-Christians), and the miracle could be interpreted as God's recognition of a specifically Christian site, it would support the conclusion that there must be something lacking in Jewish understanding if they were not convinced by it.<sup>67</sup> The problem here is with the truth of the premisses rather than the logic of the argument. The strong rhetorical language in which the Jews' lack of understanding is depicted as animalistic is another matter and is open to further debate about how literally such language was to be taken.

But even if we grant that Peter, in fact, believed Jews were not human in the strongest sense of being somehow, and despite all appearances, animals, we might argue that it was his firm belief in the validity of his rational empirical argument, together with his overarching belief in the teachings of the Church, that was the problem. Such belief meant that he failed to re-examine his conclusion (that the

<sup>65</sup> On which see further, Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (London: Elek, 1978), pp. 42–59.

<sup>66</sup> It is now generally accepted that most twelfth-century polemical works against Jews, heretics, Saracens, etc., were not intended to be used to convert such people but were to strengthen the faith of those (often the less educated, lower clergy and laity) who might be disturbed by such challenges to the faith. See p. 124, above, for the evidence of Ralph of Fly.

<sup>67</sup> Yet Peter does not actually say the Jews are literally beasts (which obviously would be irrational, in Langmuir's sense of going against plain observation). He means they are 'more like animals than humans' as lacking the defining characteristic of humanity, i.e. reason. As we saw, this idea has biblical foundation rather than depending on a new appreciation of man as a rational attributable to the renaissance of the twelfth century.

Jews lacked reason or indeed were animals) in the light of its apparent clash with what Langmuir would call 'empirical fact'. So rather than showing that 'doubt' is implicated in Peter's (incipient) anti-Semitism (i.e., believing irrational things about the Jews), it looks as if 'certainty' is the culprit. Since this is the only case that Langmuir examines in detail I have spent some time in probing its persuasiveness.<sup>68</sup>

On the other hand, Langmuir's thesis might be true, even if he has not proved it in this particular case. Can it be tested by further examples? The difficulty is to find cases where we have some reasonable knowledge of the various factors involved (doubt, and attitudes towards Jews, both theoretical and practical).<sup>69</sup> Strictly speaking it is irrational beliefs about Jews that are needed for Langmuir's argument, but we will examine the lesser case of doubt and hostility towards Jews.

### *Herbert of Bosham*

Peter the Venerable was not included in our chapter on spiritual doubt because his doubt had to be inferred in the teeth of his own explicit statements and the beliefs of his contemporaries. However, a possible candidate who attests to his own doubt is Herbert of Bosham, whose uncertainties were examined in Chapter 3, above. Although we have no direct reports of his attitude to his Jewish contemporaries, it is reasonable to suppose that he had close and amicable relationships with Jewish scholars in order to reach the exceptional level of linguistic competence in Hebrew that has been ascribed to him by those who have studied his works. Moreover Goodwin claims that his interpretation of the Psalter led him to a remarkably positive attitude towards the Jews, which would see them redeemed by their own Messiah rather than simply absorbed as the 'Jewish remnant' into Christianity.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> With the other examples such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Abelard, he merely concludes that their less hostile attitude to Jews reflects their lack of doubt.

<sup>69</sup> This seems to rule out using Otloh as an example since the evidence we have for his attitudes towards Jews is equivocal. Thus his *Liber visionum* tells the story of a monk at Ratisbon who had a vision of a Jew being led in burning chains into hell. Otloh claims to have been acquainted with the man, Abraham, who was known for his outbursts against Christianity when people spoke of Jesus Christ in his presence. But Otloh handles this in a fairly low-key manner, remarking only that such behaviour was due to the 'malice and insanity he had in his heart'. The vision is included as a warning, not specifically to Jews, but for those who doubt the reality of future punishments; see PL, CXLVI, col. 368.

<sup>70</sup> Deborah L. Goodwin, *Take Hold of the Robe of a Jew: Herbert of Bosham's Christian Hebraism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), especially chap. 7.

As we saw earlier, Herbert also experienced real and fundamental doubt about some aspects of Christianity. As he wrote in his *Life of St Thomas*, 'What if it is as the Jews say and the Messiah has not yet come?' It should be noted that this was not a wholesale adoption of the Jewish point of view, since Herbert realized that the Messiah *they* were still awaiting was not the same as the one that Christians would be expecting (that, is if he had not already come as Jesus), since the Jewish Messiah was not believed to be the Son of God.

That this was a doubt that Herbert actually experienced (as opposed to a mere scholarly speculation as in the case of Anselm's attempt to prove the existence of God by rational means) is indicated by the fact that he is at pains to explain that he no longer thinks this way. He claims that his faith was strengthened and doubt removed when Thomas Becket, whom he had secretly consulted, explained his dream of the rotating host as symbolic of his doubtful state of mind.

But despite this doubt, Herbert does not seem to have seen the faith of the Jews as a threat to his own faith. Indeed he seems to have been largely sympathetic towards the Jewish faith. Nor did he have any doubts about their intellectual capacities or human status.

### *Baldwin of Forde*

A final example is Baldwin of Forde, the only Cistercian to become Archbishop of Canterbury (the next but one after Becket), and another thinker whom we have already met in the course of this study. Here we have not only evidence from his writings of his attitude to what has been termed 'the theological Jew' but also evidence of his actual dealings with Jews, at least on one famous occasion.

Baldwin is a complex figure. According to Gerald of Wales he was a man who was promoted beyond his capacities and indeed desires. Thus it was said of him that he was 'a better monk than abbot, a better abbot than bishop, a better bishop than archbishop'.<sup>71</sup> This is perhaps rather harsh since being archbishop of Canterbury in the twelfth century was particularly difficult, as the examples of Anselm and of course, Becket attest.

<sup>71</sup> See Baldwin of Ford, *Spiritual Tractates*, trans., annotations, and intro. by David N. Bell, 2 vols (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1986), I, 9. The source is Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, in *Cambrensis, Opera*, bk II, chap. 14 (VI, 149): 'ut melior monachus simplex quam abbas, melior abbas quam episcopus, melior episcopus quam archiepiscopus fuisse videretur.'

### *Baldwin's Writings*

Baldwin is best remembered for his *Spiritual Tractates*, *Commendation of Faith*, and *Concerning the Sacrifice of the Altar*, a lengthy account of the Eucharist which eschews trying to understand how the sacrament is transformed and draws on scriptural insights to present a rounded picture of its significance in the context of history, liturgy, and belief. Here, we might have thought, is a man secure in his faith if anyone was, and so he has been portrayed in recent studies.<sup>72</sup> But if we follow the example of Langmuir's interpretation of Peter the Venerable, we could see Baldwin's writings on the Eucharist, with its defence against doubters and the long work, *De commendatione fidei*, which recommends faith over reason and experience, as indicating a fundamental lack of certainty, even doubt.

### *Portrayal of Jews in Baldwin's Writings*

What about his attitude to Jews, particularly with regard to their denial of Christianity? According to Langmuir's view of Peter the Venerable, the existence of intransigent Jews in the midst of Christendom represented a challenge to his faith. Yet Baldwin seems perfectly content to accept their presence. He sees it as the result of their having been blinded to the truth (as it says in the Bible, II Cor. 3). This is a version of the longstanding Augustinian doctrine of the Jews as a 'testament to the truth' of Christianity which, incidentally, as an explanation for their continuing presence was available to Peter the Venerable.<sup>73</sup> Thus he writes of their loss of the Law: 'Nevertheless they preserve it for us, and by preserving it for us, they serve it, so that through them we may also know it; for the law was given by God, and in it there is a witness to the grace which was given to us in Christ.'<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> 'These works reveal a man thoroughly and happily at home in cistercian spirituality, an acute theologian well aware of contemporary currents and events, and one of the last true representatives of the rich patristic-monastic tradition which was so soon to give way to the often arid scholasticism of the thirteenth century': Baldwin of Ford, *Spiritual Tractates*, I, 11.

<sup>73</sup> Whether his knowledge of the dependence of contemporary Jews on the Talmud would have weakened this argument for him is not clear. It should be noted that Baldwin was writing long after Peter. See Abulafia 'From Northern Europe to Southern Europe', pp. 185–86.

<sup>74</sup> 'Denique perdidērunt et legem, quam in testimonium contra se portant, et non seruant. Verumtamen nobis eam seruant, ut nobis seruando seruiant, ut sciamus et per eos: quia lex a Deo data est, in qua gratia testificata est, quae in Christo nobis data est': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 104, p. 455.

However, although they are thus of use to Christians, they do not themselves profit from it. As Baldwin puts it, they are like ‘the blind who carry a lantern in their hands, but do not know the way’. Here, while less than enthusiastic, his rhetoric at least maintains the Jews’ human status. Indeed Baldwin has a noteworthy description of the action that thus set them apart from others, like the gentiles, who could accept the Christian message. He describes the Jews as ‘wonderfully and miserably’ blinded. This seems to allow a measure of compassion for their fate, as well as suggesting that it was something done to them rather than something that they willed themselves. Indeed there is a suggestion in the following passage that it was the Devil who was the cause of this failure to recognize the truth:

These and many other things about the blinding of the Jews and the enlightening of the gentiles, about the abolition of the old and the establishment of the new, are so clearly written in the law and the prophets and the psalms that they could in no way be denied by the Jews, in no way be unrecognized, unless malice had not wonderfully and miserably blinded their hearts. Truth is poured in their ears but they do not hear.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, although, in the closing lines of the treatise he does address himself to the ‘impious and envious Jew’, on the whole what he *says* here about the Jews is relatively mild on the scale of anti-Judaic invective.<sup>76</sup>

### *Baldwin’s Interaction with Jews*

So much for the theory. But to get an idea of his attitude to contemporary individual Jews we may turn to the events of 3 and 4 September 1189, which attended Richard the Lionheart’s coronation in London. David Bell, who knows more about Baldwin than most, refers to the incident as a ‘regrettable episode [which] casts a further shadow upon Baldwin’s reputation’.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> ‘Hec et alia quam plurima de excecatione Iudeorum et illuminatione gentium, de abolitione ueterum et institutione nouorum, in lege et prophetis et psalmis tam manifeste scripta sunt, ut a Iudeis nullatenus negari, nullatenus possent ignorari, nisi malicia cor eorum mirabiliter et miserabiliter excecasset. Veritas instillatur auribus eorum, et non audiunt’: Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 107, p. 457. It is not explicitly claimed that it was their own malice that caused their blindness and indeed the contrast of *malicia* and *ueritas* in the passage could be taken to suggest the contrary agency of the Devil and God.

<sup>76</sup> ‘O Judee impie, inuide’: Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 107, p. 458.

<sup>77</sup> Baldwin of Ford, *Spiritual Tractates*, I, p. 16.



The evidence for what happened comes largely from the writings of an eyewitness, one Roger of Howden.<sup>78</sup> After describing the coronation he gives an account of the riots which took place in London against the Jews. They were sparked off by a melee at the banqueting hall which occurred on the night of the coronation. Leading Jews from London and further afield had made their way in to the hall, despite a prohibition having been issued against their attendance (as well as that of women) the day before. The Jews were violently removed from the hall, and in the resulting chaos some of them were beaten to death.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, one prominent Jew, Benedict of York, escaped with his life only because he was hurriedly baptized in the nearby Church of the Innocents.<sup>80</sup> The rioting spread to the city and during the night: '[T]he people rushed on the Jews of the city and despoiled them, killing many of both sexes; and set fire to their houses and reduced them to ashes and cinders.'<sup>81</sup> The next day Benedict, now called William, was brought before the King, where the following exchange took place:

Then the King sent for the man who had already been turned from a Jew into a Christian, and in the presence of those who had seen him baptized, asked him if he had become a Christian. And he replied 'No', but in order to avoid death he had allowed the Christians to do as they willed with him. Then, the King asked the Archbishop of Canterbury in the presence of numerous archbishops and bishops what should be done with him. And the Archbishop replied less cautiously [*discrete*] than he should have, saying 'If he does not wish to be God's man, let him be the Devil's and thus he who had been a Christian returned to the Jewish law.'<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> It was originally thought to be taken from two distinct accounts, one, known as the *Gesta Henrici II Benedicti abbatis*, or 'Chronicle of Benedict of Peterborough' (though, confusingly, Benedict was the owner of the book rather than its author), and the other, a chronicle by Roger of Howden. Current scholarship, however, holds that both accounts were written by Roger of Howden, although the one formerly called 'Benedict of Peterborough' was produced almost contemporaneously with the events, while the 'Roger of Howden' version was written later, after Roger retired from the royal court to Yorkshire. See D. J. Corner, 'The *Gesta regis Henrici secundi* and *Chronica* of Roger, Parson of Howden', *Bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research*, 56 (1983), 126–44.

<sup>79</sup> The two versions are slightly different; the later one [Howden] being more virulent against the Jews, and apportioning the blame for starting the fight differently.

<sup>80</sup> The priest, called William, was also from York.

<sup>81</sup> 'Audiens autem plebs civitatis Lundoniae quod curiales ita saevirent in Judaeos, irruerunt in Judaeos civitatis et spoliaverunt eos, et multos interfecerunt utriusque sexus; et domos illorum succenderunt, et in cinerem et favillam redegerunt': *Gesta regis Henrici secundi Benedicti abbatis*, ed. by William Stubbs, RS, 49, 2 vols (1867), II, 84. Interestingly, some took refuge in the houses of their gentile neighbours and were thus saved.

<sup>82</sup> The account written closer to the events (Benedict of Peterborough) reads: 'Respondit archiepiscopus minus discrete quam deberet dicens, "Si ipse homo Dei esse non vult, sit homo

In the later version (Howden's Chronicle) we see the author improving on the original text, heightening the language and adding derogatory emphasis. With regard to the lack of circumspection of Baldwin's reply he adds that it was delivered 'in a spirit of anger' and adds that 'he should have replied, "Let us seek the judgement of Christians, since he was made a Christian and now denies it."<sup>83</sup>

How are we to interpret what the Archbishop said? Roger Howden (like Professor Bell after him) certainly saw it as regrettable, in that the Archbishop spoke 'less circumspectly than he should', and both suggest that Baldwin lost his temper,<sup>84</sup> though it should be noted that this detail comes from the later, expanded, version. Baldwin's losing his cool is indeed worthy of note, given what we learn of his character from other sources. Gerald of Wales suggests that he was phlegmatic to a fault. 'When he came to power, unable to lay aside the gentleness of his innate kindliness which he had always shown as a private individual [...] he became known in public life for serious and scandalous laxity.'<sup>85</sup> But what the Archbishop suggested, although rather crudely put — and perhaps the uncharacteristic show of anger was a sop to the bystanders — was actually more in accordance with official church policy than what Howden thinks he should have said.<sup>86</sup> We might ponder what the result of Roger of Howden's suggested trial might have been for

diaboli," et sic reversus est ille qui fuerat Christianus ad legem Judaicam': *Gesta*, II, 84. Howden subsequently weakens the strong reiteration of the humanity of the Jew, when he writes: 'Ille Christianus esse non vult, homo Diaboli sit': *Roger of Howden, Chronica*, ed. by William Stubbs, RS, 51, 4 vols (1868–71), II, 12.

<sup>83</sup> '[D]ebuerat enim respondisse; "Petimus de eo iudicium Christianorum, desicut ipse Christianus sit factus, et modo contradicit." Sed quia non erat qui resisteret, praefatus Willelmus reversus est ad Judaicam pravitatem, qui postmodum parvo interlapso tempore obiit apud Northamptoniam, et factus est alienus a communi sepultura Judaeorum, similier et Christianorum, tum quia factus fuerat Christianus, tum quia ipse, sicut canis reversus ad vomitum, rediit ad Judaicam pravitatem': *Chronica*, III, 12–13.

<sup>84</sup> Though the phrase *in spiritu furoris sui* has a perfectly respectable pedigree as being used for God in the Bible (Ps. 17(18). 15), to add to the uncertainty of tone here, the phrase was also used by St Bernard of an irascible woman in his *Vita* of St Malachy; see *SBO*, III, 358.

<sup>85</sup> '[I]nnatae benignitatis mansuetudinem, quam priuatus exercuerat, in potestate non exuens [...] remissionis in publico graui cum scandalo notam incurrit': Gerald of Wales, *Itinerarium Cambriae*, bk II, chap. 14, p. 149.

<sup>86</sup> The evidence for what happened in the case of forced conversions comes largely from Continental sources. Such conversions had long been seen as non-binding though the thinking was ambiguous on this reflecting the ineluctably ambiguous position of the Jews in theological and social terms. See Alfred Haverkamp, 'Baptised Jews in German Lands in the Twelfth Century', in *Jews and Christians* (see n. 1, above), pp. 255–311.

Benedict/William as a self-declared apostate.<sup>87</sup> Surely the Archbishop's solution is more humane. The claim by Howden that Benedict was henceforth outcast from both communities also sounds a bit like wishful thinking, since forcible conversion once renounced was not seen as putting the former convert beyond the pale according to Jewish law.<sup>88</sup> Finally we might note the terms in which the Archbishop's dismissal is expressed. Benedict the Jew is still a *man* whether he chooses to be Christ's man or the Devil's.<sup>89</sup>

### *Langmuir's Thesis Revisited*

Where does all this leave Langmuir's thesis? First, it illustrates the difficulty of applying what are essentially psychological explanations to our medieval subjects. Indeed in his last word on the topic (2002) Langmuir seems to have settled for a vaguer, more generally psychological explanation, when he claims:

Starting around 1250, Jews became targets of psychopathological violence, as they would continue to be down to the twentieth century. By psychopathological violence, I mean violence that was motivated and explicitly justified by the irrational fantasies of paranoid people whose internal frontiers of faith were threatened by doubts they did not admit [...] the pathological violence of these Christians sprang from paranoia and doubt, not from belief.<sup>90</sup>

This is actually just a broadening of his argument about Peter the Venerable to an anonymous mass of 'paranoid people'. With Peter, Langmuir sees doubts where others saw only staunch defence of the faith. But even if we accept that Peter harboured doubts about the Christian faith, something more has to explain why he concluded that the Jews were less than human in rejecting that faith. This is the counter-factual claim whose irrationality, according to Langmuir, paves the way

<sup>87</sup> This amounted to mutilation or death according to Louis VII, although Emperor Henry IV was remembered for allowing forced convertees to resume their former religion.

<sup>88</sup> The rules were not entirely clear but for discussion see Haverkamp, 'Baptised Jews', especially pp. 263–64.

<sup>89</sup> This is in contrast to Howden's final word on the matter, in the *Chronicle*: 'since although he had been made a Christian, he, like a dog returning to its vomit, reverted to his Jewish depravity'; '[...] tum quia factus fuerat Christianus, tum quia ipse, sicut canis reversus ad vomitum, rediit ad Judaicam pravitatem': *Chronica*, p. 13. Of course 'homo' might be taken to denote servility but if this is the case it is equally so for the Christian and the Jew (and we might recall that popes had long styled themselves 'servant of the servants of God').

<sup>90</sup> Langmuir, 'At the Frontiers of Faith', p. 153.

to anti-Semitism. But I have suggested that even in this case, certainty, rather than doubt, was the problem.

Herbert of Bosham, on the other hand, can entertain the idea that the Jews may even be right in some of their claims, thus causing him to doubt the very foundations of his Christian belief. Yet he can face this possibility without wanting to destroy them root and branch. Indeed he presumably continued to work with Jewish scholars during the last years of his life when he was writing his commentary on the *Hebraica*. Finally, at first sight it seemed that Baldwin of Forde's supposedly antagonistic attitude towards Jews was not fuelled by doubt. But on closer examination this case also seems more complicated. Indeed, the fact that both the original assumptions can be questioned indicates how difficult it is to attribute psychological states to medieval actors.

For, on the analogy of Peter the Venerable according to Langmuir, Baldwin too might be seen as less than secure in his faith by the very fact of his writing in defence of it. Moreover, his attitude to contemporary Jews, based largely on the Howden evidence, was understood to be hostile. Putting these two together it looks as if we might have some sort of corroboration of the Langmuir thesis where doubt leads, at least, to hostility.

But, on closer examination, I have come to interpret his response to the plight of the Jew William/Benedict as relatively benign, rather than hostile. Moreover, I am *not* convinced that he had doubts simply because he wrote about matters of faith (since this would presumably have to include all writers of Christian apologetics). So I would argue that in Baldwin we have someone secure in his faith and not exhibiting particular hostility to Jews, which would put him in the same boat as Peter Abelard (according to Langmuir).<sup>91</sup>

In these examples the most observable term in the relationship seems to be the attitude of the person to the Jews. In two of the three cases we have direct evidence, and in the case of Herbert of Bosham it can be pretty safely assumed. In the two (supposed) cases of hostility the doubt factor has to be established indirectly, at best, or at worst in a circular manner from the presence of hostility to Jews. But in the one case where the presence of doubt was directly attested to by Herbert of Bosham, it does not seem to have been accompanied by hostility to Jews. Indeed, Goodwin has argued that Herbert was unusually positive towards them. Thus doubt does not seem a reliable, or indeed, a workable explanation for such hostile attitudes, let alone irrational attitudes which might lead to anti-Semitism.

<sup>91</sup> See Langmuir, 'Doubt in Christendom', p. 126.

*Conclusion*

The initial assumption of this chapter was, following Langmuir, that doubt, specifically religious doubt, might have negative effects leading to hostility towards nonbelievers, particularly the Jews. But having both examined Langmuir's arguments and having essayed further examples of my own, I have concluded that the thesis is itself dubious and also very difficult to test in individual cases. In the most promising case, that of Peter the Venerable, rather than doubt being implicated in his extremely hostile attitude towards contemporary Jews, it would seem that misplaced certainty was the cause.



## A COMMENDATION OF DOUBT?

This chapter seeks to explore how ‘doubt in an Age of Faith’ differed from ‘doubt in an Age of Uncertainty’. In other words, what might we learn from this study about how people in the twelfth century experienced and thought about doubt, and our relationship to doubt and uncertainty today?

### *Conclusions about Twelfth-Century Doubt*

Uncertainty, and its sharp end, doubt, can be found both implicitly and explicitly in twelfth-century sources. This is hardly surprising, since, despite the suggestion of an oxymoron in the phrase ‘doubt in an Age of Faith’, human existence is full of uncertainties. Theoretically a state of certainty might be achieved by persons living, for instance, in a monastery, who had surrendered their entire will to the rule and their superior, thus limiting their need to make choices in daily life. They would also have to be free from any kind of intellectual curiosity and accept whatever pronouncements the church chose to make on every possible subject (or better still withdrew their attention entirely from everything but communion with God). But, even in this unlikely case, the question of their ultimate salvation, given the inscrutable ways of the Lord would be in doubt, a matter to which even the most saintly might not be indifferent.

But since we usually learn about the lives and deaths of saints from a third party, whose agenda is very often to secure their recognition as such, whatever doubts the subject might have had are not usually stressed. So while Anselm made the point in numerous letters that many are called but few are chosen,<sup>1</sup> he is

<sup>1</sup> See Anselm, *Opera Omnia*, ed. by Franciscus S. Schmitt, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946–61), Ep. 2, III, 98–101; Ep 51, III, 164–65; Ep. 167, IV, 41–42; Ep. 184, IV, 68–69.

described on his deathbed by Eadmer as simply wondering whether he might be spared a little longer to ‘settle a question about the origin of the soul, which I am turning over in my mind [...] for I do not know whether anyone will solve it when I am dead’.<sup>2</sup> His reception at the court of the Lord is, at least in Eadmer’s mind, a foregone conclusion.

There was, of course, room for uncertainty about the timing of death; as St Bernard remarked, ‘Nothing is as certain as death; nothing as uncertain as the time of its coming.’<sup>3</sup> This truth is sometimes overturned in hagiography, when the saint is able to predict the time of his or her passing.<sup>4</sup> In *The Life of Ailred* we catch a glimpse of the tension between what appears to be an actual account of the uncertain process of his dying and the hagiographical preference for a pre-determined time of death. In Chapter 54, Walter Daniel describes the three days preceding Ailred’s death, during which he expressed his urgent wish to leave the world. His repeated pleading, ‘hasten for the love of Christ’, suggests that he did not know when he was going to die.<sup>5</sup> But in defiance of the logic of the situation, Ailred is represented in the next chapter as predicting the time of his death to a monk who was one of his attendants. He appears to him in a dream and says he will die ‘on the day before the Ides of January’. This topos indicates how strong the desire to overcome uncertainty was, if not for saints, then for their biographers and presumably for their readers.

The case of Robert of Béthune is somewhat different. His last days, the culmination of a forty-eight-day illness, during which he obeyed the papal summons to the Council of Reims, were keyed to the events of Holy Week. It had always been his custom to meditate on the events surrounding the passion during this time,

<sup>2</sup> ‘Verum si mallet me adhuc inter vos saltem tam diu manere, donec quaestionem quam de origine animae mente revolvo absolvere possem gratanter acciperem, eo quod nescio utrum aliquis eam me defuncto sit soluturus’: *The Life of St Anselm by Eadmer*, ed. and trans. by R. W. Southern, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), bk II, chap. 66, p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Nihil morte certius, nihil hora mortis incertius’: St Bernard, *Sentences, series 3*, in *SBO*, VI, 107.

<sup>4</sup> As did Hildegard, for instance (*Vita*, chap. 27) and Hermann Joseph (*Vita*, chap. 55) and, eventually, Elisabeth von Schönau. See *Elisabeth of Schönau: The Complete Works*, trans. by Anne L. Clark (New York: Paulist, 2000), pp. 255–73.

<sup>5</sup> The care with which Walter describes what happened, including the detail that Ailred reverted to English *in extremis* — goes beyond the usual hagiographical commonplaces: ‘Quod multociens per nomen Christi commendavit, et Anglice quidem, quia nomen Christi hac lingua una sillaba continetur et facilius profertur, et dulcius quodammodo auditur. Dicebat ergo, ut uerbis eius utar, “Festinate, for crist luue,” id est: pro Christi amore festinate’: *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel*, ed. and trans. by Frederick M. Powicke (London: Nelson, 1950), pp. 59–60.



but here the hagiographer gives a compelling picture of how such practice was incorporated into his last illness. For example, on Easter Saturday,

He was present and watching by the Lord's tomb; tearfully he adores his wounds and death. He sees the pious women sitting by the tomb mourning and lamenting the Lord and he weeps with them. He thinks of the disciples lying sad and hidden and he joins with them.<sup>6</sup>

While it does not seem that Robert had a definite premonition of the time of his death, the period during which he suffered was certainly seen as fitting. However, he was (for a prospective saint) uncharacteristically uncertain about his own merits, and on Easter Saturday he summoned his closest friends, Reginald Prior of Wenlock and David the Deacon, to his bedside where he taxed them thus:

'Have I not in my weakness, asked that you recall my offences to my negligent and forgetful mind, just as you remember them?' 'We have, Father', they said, 'insofar as we could'. 'And did you not know or did you think it unimportant that I had at home a black dog with white feet, noble, but still a dog; that I have a tame hind, a ram with four horns, cranes and peacocks, and other vain delights, to all of which I, wretch, was accustomed to cast or feed with my hands, bread which I myself had blessed on the table, stealing from the poor and sick to whom the leavings of my table were due?'<sup>7</sup>

That this is an extreme view of the place of pets in episcopal households can be seen by a comparison with Hugh of Lincoln and his swan, about which neither Hugh nor his biographer seems to have had any qualms.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> 'Circa sepulchrum Domini uersatur et excubat; uulnera ejus et mortem luctuosus adorat. Contuetur mulieres pias sedentes contra sepulchrum lamentantes et flentes Dominum, et collacrimatur. Cogitat discipulos latitantes et tristatos, et constrictatur' (although *contristatur* would give a better reading): *Vita Roberti*, chap. 25, fol. 30<sup>r</sup>. It is interesting to see how this seems to have anticipated the meditative practices that Ailred recommended to his sister the anchoress in *De institutione inclusarum*, ed. by Anselm Hoste and Charles H. Talbot, CCCM, 1 (1971).

<sup>7</sup> 'Quomodo neglexistis necessitates meas nouissimas et maiores quas fidei uestre commiseram? Stupent et se mutuo contuentes hesitant quid intelligat. Et addidit. Nonne uos obnoxius rogaueram ut offensas meas memorantes ad memoria mihi reduceretis, tamquam negligenti nimis et olivioso? fecimus, inquit, pater ut potuimus. Et nescitis inquit aut paruipenditis quod habebam in domo mea canem nigrum albipedem curialem quidem sed tamen canem. et quod habebam ceruum domesticum, anetem quadricornem, grues et pauones et cetera uanitatum oblectamenta quibus omnibus ego miser panem quem ipse benedixeram in mensa proiicere uel manibus meis porrigere consueueram surreptor pauperum et languentum quibus mense mee reliquie debebantur': *Vita Roberti*, fol. 30<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> See Gerald of Wales, *Vita S. Hugonis*, in *Opera*, VII, chap. 1, p. 92, where sparrows and 'mures silvestres qui vulgari vocabula Scurelli dicuntur' ate not only 'in mensa [...] sed etiam de disco proprio'.

When his friends failed to apply the discipline to him as hard as he thought proper, 'seizing the rods with his own hand he supplied what the others could not'. In this way he was able to partake of the rejoicing on Easter Day and 'in greater security he awaited his end, fearing only that it be too long deferred'. Happily he did not have to wait much longer, since 'full of days he fell asleep in the Lord in the 1148th year of the Lord's incarnation on the 16 kalends of May'.<sup>9</sup>

If the doubts of candidates for sainthood were not often reported, it is fortunate for us that there were plenty of people who did not achieve even this level of assurance and so can illustrate a range of the kinds of doubts experienced in the twelfth century and the ways in which they sought to resolve them. Thus we saw doubts about what might be called 'life choices', that is concerning what master to choose, what order to join, whether to allow oneself to be promoted within the hierarchy, and how to react to the claims various persons (sacred or secular) had upon them. Apart from such doubts about how to act, there were also doubts about what to believe concerning this world and, indeed, what was held to exist beyond it. To resolve such doubts a wide repertoire of aids was available, both natural and supernatural.

Indeed on some levels medieval doubt does not seem very different in its scope and manifestations from what is experienced today.<sup>10</sup> It is also apparent from this study that, just as today, people in the twelfth century exhibited a range of attitudes from the credulous to the sceptical. Likewise the degree of credulity/scepticism might differ with regard to different questions in the same person. It should also be remembered, on the question of credulity, that even the most learned in the twelfth century had much more excuse for believing, say, in the influence of the stars over human destiny than do people today. The fact that it is easier to believe something that accords with our other beliefs/world-view, sense of self, hopes, and so on, than to doubt it is also illustrated by our study. Thus we find John of Salisbury, who generally endorses a form of academic

<sup>9</sup> 'Et corripens uirgas propriis manibus suppleuit quod alienis non potuit' (*Vita Roberti*, fol. 31<sup>r</sup>); 'Deinceps securior expectat finem suum iam solum metuens ne longius differatur' (ibid., fol. 31<sup>v</sup>); 'plenus dierum obdormiuit in domino. Anno incarnationis domini m.c.xlviii. xvi kalend. mai' (ibid., fol. 32<sup>r</sup>), i.e. 16 April, 1148. Easter Day seems to have been 11 April. Chapter 24 says that he took to his bed on the third day of the Council of Reims (commenced on 21 March) and that he was ill for forty-eight days before he died. Either there is something wrong with the dates here or William is dating his illness from before he left England, which is possible since he says Robert could have refused the papal summons due to ill health.

<sup>10</sup> Which sets it apart somewhat from other objects of historical study like romantic love, madness, or sexuality.

scepticism, asking his friend to send him some (duly authenticated) relics of Three Kings and the Eleven Thousand Virgins from Cologne and enquiring about the latest pronouncements of Hildegard, although more because she was held in high regard by Pope Eugenius III than according to his own judgement of her prophetic powers.<sup>11</sup>

Those, like Guibert de Nogent, who have been praised for a certain degree of scepticism about relics seem to have been quite selective in applying their reasoning powers to specific cases. It was the competing claims to relics by rival institutions which he questioned rather than belief in the power of relics in general.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the problem of admitting doubts about what you were supposed to believe (or believe in), not just in terms of social conformity but spiritual survival, should not be underestimated. This may explain why Herbert of Bosham was convinced by a less than compelling dream to draw back from doubts about the reality of the Incarnation.

### *Medieval Responses to Doubt*

Clearly our medieval subjects tended to want to eliminate doubt and uncertainty, for reasons which also seem applicable today. Among these is the fact that excessive doubt makes it impossible to choose either what to believe or how to act. Baldwin of Forde recognized this problem specifically in regard to prayer and gave some useful advice on how to overcome the difficulty in Chapter 11 of his treatise *De commendatione fidei*:

Even the human spirit, when inspired by the Holy Spirit, in its own way helps our weakness, for it does not pray specifically for those things our weakness wants, but committing all to God, asks and desires that the things that are pleasing to him and expedient for us should be done.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> On relics, see *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, Ep. 158, p. 70: 'De cetero iam porrectas itero preces, quatinus de reliquiis regum et uirginum michi uestro aliquid transmittatis cum uestrarum testimonio litterarum.' On Hildegard, see *ibid.*, Ep. 185, p. 224: 'saltem uisiones et oracula beatae illius et celeberrimae Hildegardis apud uos sunt; quae michi ex eo commendata est et uenerabilis, quod eam dominus Eugenius speciali caritatis affectu familiarius amplectebatur.'

<sup>12</sup> See R. I. Moore, 'Guibert of Nogent and his World', in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis*, ed. by Henry Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (London: Hambledon, 1985), pp. 107–17.

<sup>13</sup> 'Spiritus quoque hominis, Spiritu sancto afflatus, et ipse suo modo infirmitatem adiuuat, quia non pro his que infirmitas desiderat definite orat, sed totum Deo committens, quod illi

More generally, in terms of doubt about what to do, medieval people had recourse to many of the same expedients as people today. The difference, here, of course, is that within these common categories our possibilities have increased beyond the wildest imaginings of the twelfth century, in the process introducing further uncertainties of choice.

### *Modern Responses to Doubt*

Thus we might compare their recourse to supernatural means of decision-making, from the simple tossing of a coin or casting lots to various forms of soothsaying, with today's range of traditional and New Age methodologies. Their local practitioners can be found in the telephone book under 'Astrology' (between 'Assayers' and 'Auction Rooms') and a larger collection under 'Clairvoyance' (between 'Cladding' and 'Cleanrooms'), although disappointingly there is no entry for 'Soothsayers'.<sup>14</sup> For those of a more literary turn of mind, bookshops, libraries, and even supermarkets will supply everything from Nostradamus to I Ching to Norse runes complete with sets of marked bones. For adepts of newer technologies the Internet can provide, at a keystroke, an unimaginable feast of possibilities.

### *Counsellors*

Advice from a trusted counsellor might involve someone personally known to the doubter, as was the case when John of Salisbury sought advice from his wide circle of friends. Sometimes the counsellor was contacted on the basis of reputation rather than ties of personal friendship. The correspondence of Hildegard von Bingen has many examples where people from various walks of life consulted her because her fame had reached their monastery, castle, or village. This approach has morphed into the contemporary business of expert, and not so expert, advice.<sup>15</sup> The possibilities here are ever expanding, partly due to the technology available and partly to the increase in surplus disposable income. But a further level of

placeat, nobisque expediat, fieri postulat et desiderat': Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 11, p. 354.

<sup>14</sup> *Adelaide Yellow Pages 2007*, Telstra Corporation, 2006.

<sup>15</sup> One wonders, for instance, what the qualifications might be for setting up as a 'life coach' (found in the *Yellow Pages* between 'Lie Detection Services' and 'Life Saving Clubs').

uncertainty for the doubter is involved, namely, how to choose among the numerous help lines and counsellors of every stripe for every kind of doubt or uncertainty.

### *Advice Columns*

The modern expansion of the field where personal advice is accessed from a distance and the answer set out for public consumption may be traced to mass-circulation newspapers, where advice columns first appeared in the late nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> A fascinating mid-twentieth-century example of such an advice column from the *Zambia Mail* includes the following exchange on a subject which was canvassed by Anselm, among others, in the twelfth century:

Can you help me on my career? I am torn to decide whether to be a clerk or a politician. I am good at both. My speaking voice is good and powerful and I am sure that any speeches I make for my equally good and powerful Party will be of considerable benefit to the community. Friends are definitely impressed by my speaking. At the same time I am making a success of my present job and would be pleased to remain in it were it not for my feeling for the Party.

He goes on to explain that his father who has three sons still at school might not be happy to support his unpaid political work.<sup>17</sup> Josephine's reply is bracingly simple:

Why not be a part-time politician? You could do your public speaking at week-ends and after work. You are more likely to earn the respect of other men if you can be a politician and support yourself at the same time. Then, when your good work is recognized sufficiently to get a paid job in politics, you could give up your clerical work. I am sure your father will agree with me that this is the best course.

With the expansion of sources of advice to the uncertain has come a marked degree of specialization. While Josephine dealt with whatever came her way, from advice about bodybuilding (get work in a foundry) to how to take action about open drains in the village (get up a petition and take it to the Management Board)

<sup>16</sup> 'Dorothy Dix' (Elisabeth Meriwether Gilmer, 1861–1951), had her first column in the *New Orleans Picayune* in 1895. At the height of her fame in the 1930s her syndicated columns had a potential readership of thirty million.

<sup>17</sup> *Tell Me, Josephine*, ed. by Barbara Hall, with a foreword by the Honourable Kenneth Kaunda, Prime Minister of Northern Rhodesia (London: Andre Deutsch, 1964), pp. 55–56. The column first appeared in February 1960 when the newspaper was the *Central African Mail*. Northern Rhodesia became independent in 1964 as Zambia.

there are now special advice columns in the print media for financial, medical, sexual, scientific, and social questions.<sup>18</sup> The Internet expands the pool with help lines and chat rooms and sites of special interest both commercial and community based. Such a widening of the sources of advice has resulted in some respects in its becoming less personal and hence harder to judge for trustworthiness. This trend no doubt began with newspaper advice columns where both the questions and the answers were able to be read by a widening circle of third parties, even if the initial exchange was anonymous or pseudonymous, or indeed made up by the columnist, as Dorothy Dix was reputed to have done on occasion — hence the expression ‘Dorothy Dixer’ for a set-up parliamentary question.<sup>19</sup>

The personal moral advice for so long given by religious figures such as the priest or confessor in the twelfth century has now been largely secularized, even on ethical and religious topics. For example, *The Weekend Australian Magazine* has a column entitled ‘Modern Dilemma’ where three experts ‘The Humanist’ (also described as an ‘author’), ‘The Jurist’ (a former chief justice of New South Wales), and ‘The Ethicist’ (described as a ‘Consultant ethicist’) give individual answers to a reader’s problem, such as whether it is acceptable to break off a relationship with a text message or whether one should report to the police illegal drugs found while looking after a friend’s house. Meanwhile the Internet, being nothing if not a ‘broad church’, also furnishes the possibility of faith-based advice derived from a range of religious groupings from [www.anabaptists.org](http://www.anabaptists.org) to [www.zoroastrians.info](http://www.zoroastrians.info).

### *Working Things out for Oneself*

But even here the question of authority arises: Who has the answers and why should we trust them more than our own efforts towards making a decision? This was obviously not such a problem when the sources of advice were few, and probably personally known to the enquirer, and the amount of information one was

<sup>18</sup> *Tell Me, Josephine*, pp. 57–58; p. 136.

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted here that medieval letter collections which contain letters of advice were also ‘published’ in a sense, and so although the initial exchange may have been (semi) private, eventually it became known to a wider circle. In fact, given the public nature of medieval correspondence it was customary for anything particularly sensitive to be delivered orally by the messenger.

in a position to access concerning the problem limited. Yet even in cases where advice was sought, the seeker had to decide whether or not to accept the advice proffered. The element of choice is intrinsic to the *Modern Dilemma* column, mentioned above, where the three answers are simply juxtaposed and one has to choose between the differing opinions of the 'humanist', the 'jurist' and the 'ethicist'.<sup>20</sup>

### *Legitimate and Illegitimate Doubt*

So far we have been dealing with what might be called legitimate uncertainties and even doubts. But those who found themselves doubting what they thought they should believe, or what they thought everyone else believed, were often inclined to externalize the process. In the twelfth century this was particularly the case with religious doubts. Thus Otloh von St Emmeram assumed that his doubts concerning the reliability of the Bible and the nature of God were the work of the Devil. Sometimes such doubts were attributed to a more naturally occurring form of illness or mental derangement.<sup>21</sup> Such pathological manifestations of doubt and uncertainty may be explained according to the theory of 'cognitive dissonance' which, although it was developed in a contemporary context, can usefully be applied to earlier times.<sup>22</sup>

### *Diversity of Religious Belief*

Of course, the range of permissible religious beliefs has been vastly expanded and is one of the greatest differences between the twelfth century and our own times. For instance, today you can still be counted as some kind of Christian even if you

<sup>20</sup> Obviously it would be more of a dilemma if there were only two advisors, since as it is, one can opt for the majority opinion. Yet one would not want to be guided solely by the descriptions of the advisors since minimal research reveals that the 'humanist' has definite New Age tendencies and the 'ethicist' has institutional connections of an obviously sectarian (i.e., Roman Catholic) kind.

<sup>21</sup> Although illness (including mental illness) was very often considered to be the work of the Devil as well. See Sabina Flanagan, 'Heresy, Madness and Possession in the High Middle Ages', in *Heresy in Transition*, ed. by Ian Hunter and others (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 29–41.

<sup>22</sup> See Leon Festinger, *Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957) and Michael S. Gazzaniga, 'Leon Festinger', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1 (2006), 88–94.

subscribe to positions which would have been considered heretical in twelfth-century Europe.<sup>23</sup> Nor does the increased variety of available denominations usually cause a problem of choice, since most people stick to the faith with which they grew up, a tendency that was understood by Abelard and endorsed by Montaigne. These days, those who do not, have only their own faith community to deal with, rather than a punitive state.<sup>24</sup> For example the 2006 Australian census form asks in its non-compulsory question on religious affiliation (with what might be seen as promiscuous inclusivity): 'What is the person's religion?' with the boxes to tick being Catholic, Anglican (Church of England), Uniting Church, Presbyterian, Greek Orthodox, Buddhism, Baptist, Islam, Lutheran or Other — please specify. Examples of 'Other' include 'Salvation Army, Hinduism, Judaism, Humanism'. Perhaps more significantly at the end of the question there is also a box for 'No religion'. Much could be said about the attainment of such religious freedom and indeed, freedom from religion, but here I note simply that its achievement has come only belatedly even to so-called 'advanced Western democracies'. The case of political toleration has run a parallel but not entirely comparable course. But the idea that the exporting of 'democracy' will ensure religious freedom has yet to be tested in places like Afghanistan and Iraq.

### *Epistemological Certainty: God and Science*

Despite what might be seen as individual and private doubts experienced by people within twelfth-century Christendom, there was generally held to be a theoretical, and possibly, temporal, end to uncertainty, and a ground for every kind of truth, not to mention justice and morality, in the existence of God, even if human beings were not (or not yet) privy to such knowledge. We can say that this view of the world held more or less up to the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> In the

<sup>23</sup> The most obvious being denial of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

<sup>24</sup> This is not, however, the case in places like Afghanistan where Sharia law treats apostasy from Islam as a crime punishable by death. See the report in *The Australian* newspaper, 22 March 2006, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> And this view has still not been completely abandoned. According to government census figures in 2001, 15.5 per cent of Australians claimed to have 'no religion'. Since answering the question on religion was optional and a significant number of people (0.37 per cent) put down 'Jedi' for their religion, the result may be skewed one way or the other: <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/BFD>> [accessed 22 March 2006]. Somewhat surprisingly, the equivalent figure for the USA for 2001 appears to be 14.7 per cent: US Census Bureau,



twelfth century, God as epistemological backstop is seen even in matters of fact. For example, in the enquiry held into Hildegard von Bingen's life and works with a view to her canonization in 1233 there was some difficulty in recording the names of those who had experienced miraculous cures at her hands due to the elapse of time. The clerics making the report frequently had recourse to the phrase 'whose names are unknown, but God knows them'.<sup>26</sup> We might recall here John of Salisbury's comment on what he takes to be the proper method of enquiry into various branches of knowledge. The ultimate question is 'why a thing is so', which is the prerogative of the divine majesty as the ultimate cause of all things. While this idea has not entirely disappeared, a major difference between our time and the twelfth century is the post-enlightenment trust in what has been termed 'heroic science' as a complete (or partial) replacement for God, both epistemologically and (sometimes) ontologically.<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly such trust in 'science' and 'reason' seems to have diminished, in some quarters, over the past century. There are various reasons for such a change in attitude. Some could be considered 'moral' since, it is argued, science has been involved in producing such things as atomic bombs, and other WMD, or 'empirical' in that some scientific theories have needed to be modified or discarded; or indeed in the special case of subatomic physics where some degree of 'indeterminacy' seems to be irreducible.<sup>28</sup> Hence the idea has arisen that now things are more uncertain than ever. More specifically, it is claimed that there is no longer a secure logical or empirical/scientific basis for what we claim to know and so one person's belief is as good as that of another. As Solomon Feferman remarks in a review of a book on Gödel's number theory, 'Like Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, Gödel's incompleteness theorem has captured the public imagination, supposedly demonstrating that there are absolute limits to what can be known.' In the course of the review he points out further misconceptions that arise from a failure to understand what Gödel was about, concluding that '[a]lthough the incompleteness theorems do not have direct philosophical

Statistical Abstract of US, <<http://www.census.gov/prod/2005pubs/06statab/pop.pdf>> [accessed 12 November 2006].

<sup>26</sup> See Sabina Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen: A Visionary Life* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> See Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: Norton, 1994), 'The Heroic Model of Science', pp. 15–51.

<sup>28</sup> On this subject see, among others, Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) and *Telling the Truth*, especially chaps 1 and 5.

consequences for the nature of mathematical truth, let alone the nature of truth in general (and even less for “what is involved in being human”) they certainly raise questions of great interest for the philosophy of mathematics’.<sup>29</sup>

### *Religious Certainty and the Perils of Monotheism*

In the face of this new doubt various forms of dogmatism, flowing in to fill the uncertainty gap, have been gaining strength. What Horace said about nature could equally be applied to religious and other kinds of fundamentalism.<sup>30</sup> We can see this being applied to doubts about how to act on a personal level by such responses as the ‘W[hat]W[ould]J[esus]D[o]?’ phenomenon. While the idea of taking Jesus as a moral pattern has been implicit in Christianity from its beginnings and was, indeed, part of the apostolic movement in the twelfth century, putting the question in this catchy form stems from a book written in 1896 called *In His Steps* by Charles Sheldon. In the beginning the notion was linked with the Social Gospel of Walter Rauschenbusch but over the years the social aspect has become somewhat diluted and in its present form is applied more as an individualistic guide for behaviour.<sup>31</sup>

Such an approach to the uncertainties of life is satirized in a short story by the novelist Lee Smith. When Jenny’s mother, unable to cope with the strains of a disintegrating marriage, is hospitalized at “a lovely place” in Asheville, North Carolina’, the thirteen-year-old is sent to stay with her mother’s cousin, in Re-pass, South Carolina. To her own surprise she embraces the new regime which is almost the opposite of what she had been used to at home and even (for a time) wishes to be like Rayette, her second cousin: ‘I wanted to bang on the table with my gavel, to run clubs, to wear a huge cross [...], and most of all to be *absolutely sure* about everything in the world.’ The main criterion in Cousin Glenda’s house was ‘What would Jesus think of this?’ Jesus did not think much of rock and roll, for instance: ‘He apparently prized neatness, cleanliness, and order above all things; I imagined that the plastic runners on the living room carpet and the

<sup>29</sup> Solomon Feferman, ‘Provenly Unprovable’, review of *Incompleteness: The Proof and Paradox of Kurt Gödel*, by Rebecca Goldstein, *London Review of Books*, 9 February 2006, pp. 30–32.

<sup>30</sup> ‘Naturam expelles furca, tamen usque recurret’: Horace, *Epistles*, I.10.24. A variant of this tag is found in Chapter 4 of *Vita Roberti* (fol. 4v) in the context of Robert’s care for his brother’s children.

<sup>31</sup> See Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (New York: MacMillan, 1908).

cellophane covers on all the lampshades were His idea.<sup>32</sup> Although the story is set in 1958, such behaviour would not seem out of place today. A Web search shows that this expedient for moral and even political choices is immensely popular and not just in the American South. Nor is it confined to evangelicals or Republicans.<sup>33</sup> Chris Bell, a former Democratic congressman and failed candidate in the gubernatorial race for Texas in 2006, famously asked, 'WWJD about stem cell research?'<sup>34</sup> Ironically, given its origins, both biblical and nineteenth-century, the idea has also been commercialized as the name of businesses selling 'Christian apparel', T-shirts and wrist bands emblazoned with 'WWJD'.<sup>35</sup> Of course, this is not so different from basing one's actions on, or arguing from 'what the Bible says', or indeed what the Koran says. It is, however, an easier course, since one can apparently know intuitively what Jesus would have done or thought even in the most unlikely situations where the Bible has nothing to say on the matter or indeed furnishes conflicting messages. In 1958 in Repass, South Carolina, for instance, Jesus apparently had no objection to adults smoking.<sup>36</sup> In 2005 in Houston, Texas, according to ex-Congressman Bell, Jesus would have seen stem cell research as a 'moral imperative'.<sup>37</sup>

### *Testing and Reality-based Communities*

The problem about such an approach writ large is that it makes for unwarranted and irrefutable certainty, which is likely to conflict with the rights and beliefs of

<sup>32</sup> Lee Smith, *News of the Spirit* (New York: Ballantine, 1997), 'Live Bottomless', pp. 55–156 (p. 102).

<sup>33</sup> However, while Catholic bookshops happily promote WWJD merchandise there is an ideological problem in that such expedients fail to respect the magisterium of the Catholic Church, as pointed out by Professor Bainbridge. See <[www.professorbainbridge.com/respecting\\_the.html](http://www.professorbainbridge.com/respecting_the.html)> [accessed 16 August 2006].

<sup>34</sup> In the *Wise County Messenger*, 28 April 2005. See <<http://www.wcmessenger.com/opinion/columns/EEEuYFpyuVwDEWk.php>> [accessed 31 December 2007].

<sup>35</sup> This has raised interesting issues of copyright involving the descendents of Sheldon and for Janie Tinklenberg, the youth worker from Holland, Michigan, who revitalized the idea by the getting WWJD woven into bracelets. See Damien Cave, 'What Would Jesus do — about Copyright?' <<http://archive.salon.com/business/feature/2001/10/25/wwjd/print.html>> [accessed 31 December 2007].

<sup>36</sup> See Smith, *News of the Spirit*, p. 109.

<sup>37</sup> See n. 34, above.

others. While this is not such a problem if the maxim is only applied to an individual's private conduct, it does have repercussions if one is on the school board and is convinced that Jesus would not have thought much of evolution. The problem here is how anyone could counter such a belief by rational argument based on scientific knowledge.

Even more worrying is the suggestion that something similar to this approach has been guiding decision-making at the highest levels. The alarm was raised by an article in the *New York Times*, 17 October 2004, on the White House and 'reality-based communities' by Ron Suskind.<sup>38</sup> Suskind describes how at a meeting with one of President Bush's senior advisors, who called to inform him of the White House's disapproval of an article he had written in *Esquire* about Karen Hughes (former communications director for Bush),

He then told me something that at the time I didn't fully comprehend — but which I now believe gets to the very heart of the Bush presidency. The aide said that guys like me were 'in what we call the reality-based community,' which he defined as people who 'believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality.' I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. 'That's not the way the world really works any more,' he continued. 'We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality — judiciously, as you will — we'll act again, creating new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors [...] and you, all of you, will be left just to study what we do.'<sup>39</sup>

On what basis are such decisions made? According to Suskind and other observers of the White House from both sides of politics it is often 'instinct', 'gut feeling', 'faith', something that often gets close to being a direct line to God.<sup>40</sup> Suskind concludes: 'Bush grew into one of history's most forceful leaders, his admirers will attest, by replacing hesitation and reasonable doubt with faith and clarity.' Yet, as has been pointed out, by John Kerry among others, 'you can be certain and be wrong'. Suskind ends by quoting the words of Jim Wallis, a

<sup>38</sup> Senior national affairs reporter for the *Wall Street Journal*, 1993–2000.

<sup>39</sup> This leads to the surreal situation where in March 2006, the former Prime Minister of Iraq (once thought to be a puppet of the Americans) declared that the situation in his country was now one of civil war and the White House denied it. Such denials continued even when major US news organizations such as NBC decided that the conflict was indeed a civil war. See *The Australian*, 29 November 2006, p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> A similar kind of thinking has been noted in relation to Bush's ally, Prime Minister Tony Blair (1997–2007). See Rod Liddle, 'When Government Leaders Talk to God, It Can Be a One-way Conversation', *The Weekend Australian*, 29–30 December 2007, Inquirer, p. 21.

Christian leader for social change and author of *Faith Works* (formerly but no longer a part of the president's 'faith based community initiative') on the subject of such misplaced certainty: "real faith [...] leads us to deeper reflection and not — not ever — to the thing we as humans so very much want" [...] "Easy certainty."

### *Scepticism and Certainty*

What then of those 'enlightenment principles and empiricism' alluded to by Suskind.<sup>41</sup> The trick is to maintain a *reasonable* scepticism towards the world. Obviously the idea that people should be in a constant state of doubt about everything leads to a kind of Cartesian solipsism.<sup>42</sup> As Bertrand Russell remarks in 'Philosophy for Laymen', 'it is not enough to recognize that all our knowledge is, to a greater or less degree, uncertain and vague; it is necessary, at the same time, to learn to act upon the best hypothesis without dogmatically believing it'.<sup>43</sup> And the best hypothesis, given Russell's empirical and enlightenment credentials, would be the one, to put it in modern terms, which was approved, provisionally and subject to change on the grounds of further evidence, by the 'reality-based community'.

### *Consequences of Uncertainty*

We have already looked at attempts to eliminate uncertainty in relation to an individual's own personal beliefs and action and also to beliefs and action on a larger scale. The medieval intellectual project was to eliminate uncertainty prescriptively in all fields so that both knowledge and how to behave in different

<sup>41</sup> I would like to rehabilitate the notion of 'enlightenment values' as well, since it has become something of a whipping boy of late.

<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, Ludwig Wittgenstein's last, unfinished, piece of writing was *Über Gewissheit* (1951), published with an English translation as *On Certainty* by Elizabeth Anscombe and Georg von Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969). I confess that I have found it very difficult even to be reasonably sure of what Wittgenstein is saying in these four-hundred-plus numbered remarks. But it seems that the propositions he calls 'certain' have only a normative role in the language game and do not express any form of metaphysical truth. This is a conclusion with which Russell would probably agree, even if not with the manner in which it was reached.

<sup>43</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Unpopular Essays* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1950), p. 43.

circumstances would eventually be secure. Thus Abelard's method of doubt was one which was eventually expected to lead to the truth. Unfortunately the logic (and to a large extent the natural science) which was adopted in the Middle Ages from earlier Greek models was basically Aristotelian. While Charles Freeman, in *The Closing of the Western Mind*, has a rather rosy picture of 'Greek intellectual life' and claims that this was largely due to '[i]ts stress on the provisional nature of knowledge and acceptance that all "authorities" were to be challenged', it is true that reverence for 'authorities', including Aristotle, tended to hamper medieval scientific investigation.<sup>44</sup> Aristotelian logic, with its reliance on the syllogism and binary oppositions, fitted well with aspects of Judaeo-Christian thought (for example, 'If you are not with me you are against me' and 'I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot').<sup>45</sup>

The problem is that if certainty is not how the world works, or at least is not practically attainable by humans within it with regard to many complicated subjects, how should we adapt to the situation? Unfortunately the demand for certainty does not leave much room for nuances, ambiguity, or simply suspended judgement. Even more destabilizing is the idea that there might not ever be a 'right answer' or complete certainty in some matters.

### *Possible Remedies*

However, the call to question everything, to be sceptical in face of perceived verities, does not mean you have to be without principles of beliefs. Rather, it means one must be prepared to allow, when confronted by countervailing reasons or evidence, that you might be wrong. The problem here is that it is easy enough to direct this appeal to others, as did Cromwell in his address to the General Assembly of the Scottish Kirk, but harder to apply it to one's own beliefs and assumptions.<sup>46</sup> In the same way it is more difficult to enter imaginatively into the minds of those who hold different beliefs than to dismiss them as deluded or

<sup>44</sup> Charles Freeman, *The Closing of the Western Mind: The Rise of Faith and the Fall of Reason* (New York: Knopf, 2003), p. 403.

<sup>45</sup> Matt. 12. 30; Rev. 3. 15–16. It would be interesting to speculate how differently things might have developed if more than fragments of the propositional logic developed in the Stoic school had been available. On this see Michael Lapidge, 'The Stoic Inheritance', in *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, ed. by Peter Dronke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 81–112.

<sup>46</sup> 'Consider, gentlemen, in the bowels of Christ, that ye may be mistaken.'

wicked.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, those who are prepared to question their own beliefs may be seen to fall into the invidious situation pictured in Yeats's well-known lines from 'The Second Coming': 'The best lack all conviction, while the worst | Are full of passionate intensity.'<sup>48</sup> Much attention has recently been paid to this notion as a characteristic dilemma of liberals in the political process. One way out of this is to argue, as does Michael P. Lynch, that the liberal ideals of tolerance and equality may be as fiercely held as those of their conservative oppositions.<sup>49</sup>

### *Schooling Uncertainty*

Bertrand Russell claimed that the quest for certainty was an intellectual vice and that the best way of dealing with it was a study of philosophy.<sup>50</sup> If this seems a little austere it may be that other cultural products may be pressed into service. Anything that helps to suggest that reality is more complex and less black-and-white than we might like to think is useful. The study of history, is, of course, an obvious candidate. Moreover, most works of literature of a certain level of complexity will reflect the messy nature of reality rather than presenting black/white dichotomies. It would be interesting to trace the representation of uncertainty and its consequences in imaginative literature since the Middle Ages. A start could be made with the twelfth-century poem *Parzifal*, the opening word of which is *Zweifel* (doubt).<sup>51</sup>

A recent interesting development is that some novels and plays have taken as their points of departure certain figures and events that are implicated in the more

<sup>47</sup> The speed with which a hypothesis can be transformed into mainstream belief is strikingly illustrated by the case of anthropogenic climate change. It is now quite common for those who question this idea to be labelled 'climate change deniers', with the opprobrium more properly reserved for 'Holocaust deniers'.

<sup>48</sup> *Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London: Macmillan, 1958), p. 211.

<sup>49</sup> 'If we want to rediscover an intellectual foundation for liberal passion, then we need to forget about the beige of moral neutrality [the reference here is to the work of John Rawls] and favor the red of moral conviction. We need to remember that moral convictions are just that, beliefs that some political ideals are objectively better for society than others' (Michael P. Lynch, 'Where is Liberal Passion?', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 22 April 2005, p. B9).

<sup>50</sup> Russell, *Unpopular Essays*, 'Philosophy for Laymen', pp. 35–49 (p. 49).

<sup>51</sup> Other possibilities are discussed in Theodore Ziolkowski, *Hesitant Heroes: Private Inhibition, Cultural Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), including Sir Walter Scott's suggestively named *Waverley* novels.



general scientific uncertainty of the last century. Michael Frayn's play about the meeting between Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg, *Copenhagen*, is one such, while the novel *A Game with Sharpened Knives* presents an equivocal account of Ernst Schrödinger's time in Dublin during the Second World War when he was given refuge at the newly established Institute for Advanced Studies.<sup>52</sup> A more specific challenge to current views as to the moral complications of life is the Broadway play *Doubt*, which won the Pulitzer prize for drama in 2005. This play takes on aspects of the moral panic over sexual abuse of minors by the Catholic Church. In an interview, the author, Patrick Shanley, says of his childhood in the fifties in the Bronx: 'Television was black and white; morality was black and white [...]. They had a book called the catechism, with the answers to every philosophical question, and it wasn't even that long a book.' He adds:

The play's not about the church; it's the role of doubt in our psyches, in our lives [...]. It's a rigorous and exciting exercise to doubt. It's not a sign of weakness but of wisdom and growth, and it's fallen into disrepute. The deliberate and thoughtful person has been pushed aside in favor of people who talk loud and shout each other down, and I think that's a mistake.<sup>53</sup>

## *Trust*

So far we have touched upon the downside of doubt and the resulting quest for certainty in intellectual and moral or political contexts together with ways in which uncertainty might be accommodated or even embraced. But there is another consequence of doubt which should be mentioned. In the Reith Lectures for 2002 Onora O'Neill discussed the perceived 'crisis of trust' in contemporary

<sup>52</sup> *Copenhagen* premiered in May 1998, at the Royal National Theatre, London. In his postscript to the published version, *Copenhagen* (London: Methuen, 1998), Michael Frayn wrote: 'And since, as the Copenhagen Interpretation establishes, the whole possibility of saying or thinking anything about the world, even the most apparently objective, abstract aspects of it studied by the natural sciences, depends upon human observation, and is subject to the limitations which the human mind imposes, this uncertainty in our thinking is also fundamental to the nature of the world' (p. 101). In his prefatory author's note to *A Game with Sharpened Knives* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), Neil Belton writes: 'This is a work of fiction. Events described in it are imaginary, although it draws on known facts in the life of Erwin Schrödinger, who came to Dublin in 1939. Ireland during the war years was a place where much was still undecided.'

<sup>53</sup> See the article in *The Weekend Australian*, 11–12 February 2006, Review section, pp. 16–17.



society and the measures, which she refers to as ‘the revolution in accountability’, put in place to deal with it.<sup>54</sup> She starts from the premise that ‘[e]ach of us and every profession and every institution needs trust’ and refers to the *Analects of Confucius* for a general recognition of this observation. Interestingly, Baldwin of Forde, in his *De commendatione fidei*, starts his treatise on what is largely devoted to faith in the Christian God with some very similar remarks on the need for faith in human society

Without faith things cannot be governed, the offices and duties of society cannot be apportioned, nor can pairs of lovers be matched. No kingdoms, no cities, no homes of individual families, nor any group, whether large or small, of people living socially can exist without faith and continue in its state of happiness.<sup>55</sup>

Baroness O’Neill concludes that what modern society needs is more trust and less bureaucratic ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’ which, although intended to provide certainty, bring with them various unintended results such as people not having time to do their proper jobs, in universities, for instance.

Such examples of the unintended consequences of the quest for certainty in public and private institutions have historical parallels of an even more detrimental kind. We saw in Chapter 2 how within some jurisdictions torture was used in order to get a confession. Yet the notion that a confession would ensure that all and only the guilty would be condemned proved to be flawed. The supposedly less certain method of trusting the judgement of a jury (or in some cases that of a single judge/legal officer), which allowed for such notions of ‘reasonable doubt’ and the ‘benefit of the doubt’, was premised on the notion that some guilty people would get off but (not too many) innocent people would be wrongly condemned.

The conclusions that I think may be drawn from my investigation of uncertainty in the twelfth century and in modern life are themselves appropriately ambiguous. On the one hand, I would argue that the inevitability of uncertainty is to be embraced and that doubt should indeed be cultivated with regard to all

<sup>54</sup> Onora O’Neill, *A Question of Trust: The BBC Reith Lectures 2002* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 4–5.

<sup>55</sup> ‘Sine fide nec gubernacula rerum ministrari, nec hominum officia uel ministeria dispensari, nec amantium paria ualent combinari. Non regna, non ciuitates, non singularum domicilia familiarum, nec quicumque cetus maiores uel minores hominum socialiter uiuentium, sine fide possunt constare, et in statu sue felicitatis permanere’: Baldwin of Forde, *De commendatione*, chap. 1, p. 345. It is unfortunate that Baldwin appears to have seen this confirmed in his own dealings with the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, when he fell out with them as archbishop.

claims for knowledge and behavioural prescriptions, even one's own. Thus I was tempted to call this chapter, reversing the title of Baldwin's treatise, 'A Commendation of Doubt'. But on the other hand, recognizing, with Onora O'Neil and Baldwin himself, the need for continued trust of one's fellow doubters, 'A Commendation of Faith' (in the sense of trusting fellow humans) also seems appropriate. But how can both doubt and faith flourish in the same mind? For my final example I return to more recent history and the career of an outstanding student of the medieval past.

### *Wilhelm Levison*

Wilhelm Levison (1876–1947) belonged to an assimilated German-Jewish family that could trace its origins back to Sieberg in the late seventeenth century. He was educated at the public gymnasium at Düsseldorf and the University of Bonn, where he received his doctorate in 1898. The following year he joined the staff of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*. There he was engaged for the next two decades (with Bruno Krusch) in editing the writings of the Merovingian period, including the *Lives of St Boniface*, the eighth-century English monk known as the 'Apostle of Germany'.<sup>56</sup> At the same time he worked as an archivist in Hanover and Breslau and was from 1903 on the staff of the University of Bonn, being elected to the chair of medieval and modern history in 1920. By 1925 he was also on the board of the *Monumenta*. During this time he was known not only as an outstanding teacher and mentor but also appears to have provided material support for many of his students.<sup>57</sup>

With the rise of Nazism in the early 1930s Levison's secure life began to change. We can only imagine the anguish caused by the progressive undermining of everything he had believed in, both as a citizen and as a pillar of German academia. Although at first protected by his international reputation and academic status within Germany, he was forced from his position at the University of Bonn with the passing of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935.

What happened next is poignantly (if laconically) described in a postcard he wrote from Durham in 1940 to the Jesuit historian Father Edouard de Moreau

<sup>56</sup> *Vitae Sancti Bonifatii, Archiepiscopi Moguntini*, ed. by Wilhelm Levison, MGH Scriptores Rerum germanicarum in usum Scholarium (Hannover: Impensis Bibliopoli Hahniani, 1905).

<sup>57</sup> '[H]at er sich als wahrer Studentvater bewährt, und mancher hat bei ihm auch materielle Unterstützung und Förderung gefunden': Walter Holzmann, Foreword to Wilhelm Levison, *Aus Rheinischer und Fränkischer Frühzeit* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1948), p. 5.

in Belgium.<sup>58</sup> After thanking him for his offprint on Bishop Radbod II of Noyon-Tournai, he writes:

I have found here when the November-events of 1938 had closed to me every library in my native country and had practically stopped my work by that, a very kind hospitality in this very interesting and beautifully situated 'historic' cathedral town. Being 'Honorary Fellow' of the University (which had conferred on me a degree in 1931), I can continue my work.<sup>59</sup>

In 1942 he was invited to give the Ford Lectures at Oxford, which were published as *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* in 1946. He died in Durham the following year.

The cruel and crushing experiences of the last decade of his life might well have caused despair and a general loss of faith in a lesser man. Yet his wife reports in the bibliography of his works that she compiled shortly after his death that he considered that he had had a happy life.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps a reason for his ability to maintain this attitude (apart from strong family support) was that he seems not to have lost faith in his calling or in his fellow workers and that this trust was not misplaced.<sup>61</sup>

Thus in the preface to the Ford Lectures he thanks, as might be expected, the English colleagues who have aided him in his exile and 'have striven to persuade us to find a positive answer to the question of Goethe's Iphigenia'.<sup>62</sup> Then,

<sup>58</sup> The postcard was marked 'No Service. Return to sender', which explains its continued presence in Durham.

<sup>59</sup> Durham University Library, Archives and Special Collections: Levison Papers. Reproduced by permission of Durham University Library. The beauty of Durham's setting, almost encircled by the River Wear, may have helped his transition. In the short account he gives of himself in his family history, *Die Siegburger Familie Levison* (Bonn: Rohrscheid, 1952), he writes that his lifelong enjoyment of nature may be traced back to the place where he was born in Düsseldorf, at Karlstor by the Spee'scher lake: 'Der Blick auf dieses Gewässer und die schönen alten Bäume an seinen Ufern mag bei ihm schon in dem aufdämmernden Bewusstsein der frühesten Jugend zu der Freude an der Natur beigetragen haben, die ihn durch das Leben begleitet hat' (p. 63).

<sup>60</sup> *Wilhelm Levison, 1876–1947: A Bibliography*, ed. by Elsa Levison (Oxford: privately printed at the Oxford University Press, 1948): 'I am sending this record of a scholar's life—a happy life, he himself often called it — to his and my friends' (p. 3).

<sup>61</sup> There is insufficient evidence to say what the effects of the experience were on his religious faith or, indeed, the part it played in his life generally. The fact that he never alludes to it in any of his published works could mean either that it lay too deep for words or alternatively that it was quite negligible.

<sup>62</sup> 'Kann uns zum Vaterland die Fremde werden?' (Can a foreign country become a fatherland to anyone?), in *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century: The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford in the Hilary Term, 1943* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p. vii.

significantly, he writes, 'I should be untrue to myself' in failing to acknowledge that the foundations of his present work were laid when he was a member of the *Monumenta* and of the University of Bonn. He pays a generous tribute to 'friends, colleagues and pupils' at these institutions, 'many of whom did not bow the knee to Baal, but remained faithful till the hour of parting could no longer be avoided'. Finally, he dedicates the book with a touching Latin epigram to his wife.<sup>63</sup> Thus Levison, whose rigorously questioning intellect produced works of exemplary scholarship, also shows us by the breadth of his human sympathies and magnanimous spirit how life may be lived in a world without certainty.

<sup>63</sup> 'UXORI CARISSIMAE | PER LAETA ARDUAQUE COMITI | INDEFESSAE'. We might note here how the preface implicitly pays tribute to three traditions which informed his thought: his native German, the biblical and the classical.

## INDEX

- Abbot of St Anastatius, Rome, 31  
 Abelard. *See* Peter Abelard  
 Abraham, 97–98, 110 n. 61  
 Abulafia, Anna Sapir, 158–61, 162 n. 21, 172 n. 60  
 academicians, 94, 105, 123  
 Adalard, abbot of Cologne, 80 n. 88  
 Adrian IV, pope, 52  
 Ailred of Rievaulx, 40 n. 79, 133 n. 34, 139 n. 57, 140, 186–87  
 Ailsi, vision of, 86–88  
 Alcher of Clairvaux, 66  
 Alexander III, pope, 38–39, 54  
 Amalric, king of Jerusalem, 10  
 Anacletus, antipope, 165  
 Anders Sunesen, 102–03  
 Andrew of St Victor, 81, 95, 100 n. 32, 137 n. 48, 152  
 Anselm, nephew of St Anselm, 30 n. 46  
 Anselm, saint, 28–29, 34 n. 60, 36–37, 40–41, 43 n. 92, 85, 88, 122, 145–47, 149, 152 n. 101, 154 n. 114, 176, 185–86, 191  
 Anselme de Laon, 40 n. 81  
 anti-Judaism, 157–58, 160–61, 166, 172  
 anti-Semitism, 4, 160–62, 164, 166, 175, 182  
 Aristotle, 127, 129, 137, 139, 153, 200  
 astrology, 19, 20 n. 16, 190  
 Augustine of Canterbury, 25 n. 30, 47 n. 102  
 Augustine, saint, bishop of Hippo, 18, 22–23, 58–59, 70, 93–94, 98 n. 29, 100, 105 n. 51, 114 n. 74, 125 n. 2, 128 n. 13, 129, 134–35, 140 n. 58, 141, 147 n. 85, 177  
 Augustinian Rule, 35 n. 63, 40  
 autobiography, 6, 10, 22, 76, 118, 159  
 Baldwin of Forde, 20 n. 14, 21 n. 16, 29, 45, 80 n. 87, 82, 97–103, 109–15, 122, 124, 130 n. 20, 131–33, 176–82, 189, 190 n. 13, 203, 204  
 Bartholomew, bishop of Exeter, 21 n. 16, 24, 101, 117, 96 n. 16  
 Bartlett, Robert, 55  
 Becket. *See* Thomas Becket  
 Bede, 128, 142–43  
 Bell, Chris, ex-US congressman, 197  
 Bell, David N., 20 n. 14, 99 n. 31, 110, 178, 180  
 Belton, Neil, 202  
 Benedict/William, Jew of York, 179–82  
 Benedictine Rule, 34, 185

- Bernard, priest in Cornwall, 67  
 Bernard, saint, abbot of Clairvaux, 17 n. 6, 34–35, 37 n. 72, 44, 54 n. 121, 66 n. 31, 69, 73, 100 n. 32, 105–06, 113, 131 n. 27, 141, 144, 175 n. 68, 180 n. 84, 186  
 Berndt, Rainer, 107  
 Bertradis, recluse, 32–33  
 Bertulf, provost, 34  
 Bertulf, saint, 9  
 blasphemy, 60, 69, 77–78, 95–96, 173  
 Boethius, 129 n. 18, 131, 138, 142 n. 66, 143, 145, 151, 153  
 Boniface, saint, 92  
 Borges, Jorge Luis, 8  
 Bridlington, Anonymous of, 35 n. 63  
 Bush, George W., 198–99
- Caesarius von Heisterbach, 21, 22 n. 19, 23–24, 27, 30 n. 46, 32, 68, 69 n. 40, 70–72, 74–75, 83, 96–97, 109  
 Caesarius, martyr, 11  
 Cain, 95–96  
*Cena Cypriani*, 93  
 chiromancy. *See* palmistry  
 Cicero, 10, 33 n. 57, 138 n. 54, 143  
 Clarembald of Arras, 131  
 confession, 21 n. 18, 48, 50, 55, 65, 71, 117, 120, 192, 203  
 Conrad III, king of Germany, 17 n. 6  
 Constable, Giles, 146 n. 79, 165 n. 30  
 conversion, 6, 97 n. 24, 148 n. 88, 159 n. 9, 179–81  
 Cordula, martyr, 29 n. 41  
 Council of Paris, 1148, 10  
 Council of Reims, 1148, 64, 188 n. 9  
 Council of Soissons, 1121, 117, 164 n. 28  
 Council of Tours, 1161, 37  
 Council of Westminster, 1125, 20
- counsel, contemporary, 191–92  
 counsel, medieval, 34–37, 39–43, 80–81  
 Cousin, Victor, 139 n. 55, 141  
 credulity, 3, 5, 11, 88, 104  
 creeds, 115–20  
 Cromwell, Oliver, 200  
 crusade, 17, 45, 165, 172
- David, deacon, 187–88  
 debates, 51, 71, 104, 122, 124, 144, 146–49, 154–55, 157–60, 173–74  
 Decretals, 12  
*Decretum*, 12, 18 n. 10, 66  
 demons, 12 n. 36, 19–22, 24, 103 n. 45  
 despair, 68–69, 75, 77, 87, 95–97, 104 n. 48, 205  
 Devil, 19, 21, 23, 32–33, 71, 74, 76–78, 81, 83, 85, 97, 99 n. 31, 100–02, 104, 114, 144 n. 74, 147, 178–79, 181, 193  
 dialectic, 17–18, 105, 122–23, 129, 131–33, 136–46, 150, 152–53, 157  
 discernment of spirits, 32–33  
 dissent, 4, 98  
 divination, 17–24, 33, 43  
 Dix, Dorothy, 191–92  
 Donatus, grammarian, 91–92  
 Doubting Thomas. *See* Thomas, the apostle  
 dreams, 26, 28, 33–34, 36–37, 39, 42–45, 52, 68, 87–89, 149, 159, 167–68, 176, 186, 189  
 Dronke, Peter, 60, 64
- Eadmer, monk of Canterbury, 28–29, 36–37, 40 n. 79, 147 n. 82, 186  
 Eleven Thousand Virgins, 3–5, 11–12, 26, 29, 37, 189. *See also* St Ursula  
 Elisabeth von Schönaue, 11, 32–33, 35 n. 61, 186 n. 4

- Étienne de Tournai, 153  
 Eucharist, 6, 71–73, 83, 114, 164 n. 28, 177  
 Eugenius III, pope, 31, 34, 165, 189  
 Eusebius, 135  
 Evans, Gillian R., 154 n. 114  
 Everard of Ypres, 10, 11 n. 29, 130 n. 20  
  
 Fall, of Adam and Eve, 3, 99–104, 125–26  
 Festinger, Leon, 193 n. 22  
 Flint, Valerie, 20 n. 15  
 Foucault, Michel, 8 n. 22  
 Foy, saint, 47  
 Frayn, Michael, 202  
 free will, 24, 112, 121, 134  
 Freeman, Charles, 200  
  
 Galbert de Bruges, 34  
 Galbert of Tournai, 17–18  
 Gaudry, bishop of Laon, 22 n. 22  
 Gaunilo, monk of Marmoutier, 145  
 Gerald of Wales, 8, 11, 48–49, 113 n. 71, 176, 180, 187 n. 8  
 Gereon, saint, 168 n.46  
 Gilbert Crispin, 158  
 Gilbert Foliot, 25, 54  
 Gilbert of Poitiers, 10, 11 n. 29, 64, 131, 142  
 Godfrey, scholasticus of St Andreas, 23  
 Goodich, Michael, 77 n. 73  
 Goodwin, Deborah L., 175, 182  
 Gratian, 12  
 Gregory the Great, saint, 33 n. 57, 86, 114 n. 74, 126 n. 7, 150 n. 100  
 Guibert de Gembloux, 7, 61–64, 132 n. 30, 136 n. 45.  
 Guibert de Nogent, 6, 9–10, 22 n. 22, 164 n. 28, 189  
 Guillaume de Champeaux, 40 n. 81  
 Guillaume de Conches, 113 n. 71  
 Guillaume de Roanne, 166–68, 170  
 Guillaume de St-Thierry, 44, 105, 139 n. 55, 141  
 Guillaume de Tyr, 10, 44–46  
 Guinefort, saint, 30 n. 45  
  
 Hazzecha, abbess of Krauftal, 31–32  
 Helenrude, recluse, 29, n. 41  
 Heloise, 57–62, 64, 66, 134, 136–37, 141  
 Henry I, king of England, 41, 47 n. 102, 87  
 Henry II, king of England, 25 n. 29, 35–37, 41, 53, 82  
 Henry IV, emperor, 181 n. 87  
 Henry of Le Mans, heretic, 165  
 Henry, archbishop of Sens, 35  
 Henry, archdeacon of Chartres, 65  
 Henry, count of Champagne, 126 n. 7, 143 n. 69  
 Herbert of Bosham, 6, 39 n. 77, 67, 81–85, 89, 175–76, 182, 189  
 heresy, 50 n. 112, 55, 82, 84 n. 99, 116–17, 131 n. 27, 152, 154, 164–65, 166 n. 38, 174 n. 66, 194  
 Herman of Tournai, 16–19, 116 n. 80  
 Hermann Joseph von Steinfeld, 3–4, 12, 25, 29–30, 64, 67, 86  
 Hermann-Judah, 158–59  
 Hervé de Bourg-Dieu, 93–94  
 Heylard, priest of Wuninsdorp, 71  
 Hildegard von Bingen, 5, 7–8, 21, 31–33, 35, 59, 61–66, 69–70, 72–74, 80, 96–97, 125, 131 n. 26, 132 n. 30, 134, 136, 139 n. 57, 152 n. 109, 159, 186 n. 4, 189 n. 11, 190, 195  
 Hilduin de St Denys, abbot, 142–43  
 Holy Lance, 45–46, 49  
 Holy Spirit, 32, 59–60, 62, 95, 114 n. 74, 131, 189

- Horace, 196 n. 30  
 Hudson, John, 51  
 Hugh of Fouilloy, 86 n. 109  
 Hugh of Poitiers, 50 n. 112  
 Hugh of St Victor, 81, 92, 100 n. 32, 102 n. 39, 106–10, 112, 118, 121–22, 124, 126, 127 n. 13, 132–33, 139 n. 56  
 Hugh, bishop of Lincoln, 40 n. 79, 187  
 Hugo, abbot of St Augustine, 47 n. 102  
 Hugo, brother of Hildegard, 61  
  
 Incarnation, 83–84, 143, 153, 161, 171, 188–89  
 incubation, 34 n. 60  
 Innocent II, pope, 41  
 Innocent III, pope, 66  
 Isidore of Seville, 18–20, 136–37, 142  
  
 Jerome, saint, 57, 94, 126 n. 7, 134–35, 143  
 Jesus, 9–10, 29, 46, 58–60, 62, 79, 83, 94, 98, 103 n. 45, 111, 136, 139–40, 165, 171 n. 55, 172, 175–76, 196–98  
 John of Canterbury, bishop of Poitiers, 37  
 John of Forde, 137 n. 48  
 John of Salisbury, 16, 18–21, 24–25, 33 n. 57, 35–39, 52, 54, 82 n. 93, 92, 94, 112–13, 121 n. 97, 123, 126 n. 7, 137, 142 n. 66, 143, 188–90, 195  
 John, king of England, 25  
  
 Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, 36, 41  
 Langmuir, Gavin, 5, 160–63; 165–69, 174–77, 181–83  
 Lateran Council IV, 55, 116, 117  
 Lenz, Martin, 138 n. 54  
 Levison, Wilhelm, 5, 12, 204–06  
 Louis VII, king of France, 17 n. 6, 82  
*lunaria*, 21 n. 17  
  
 Luscombe, David E., 143  
 Lynch, Michael P., 200  
  
 Marenbon, John, 140 n. 60, 148 n. 92  
 mass, 28, 37, 49, 52, 67, 68 n. 38, 71–73, 83–84, 116, 125 n. 3, 164–65. *See also* Eucharist  
 Maurilius, archbishop of Rouen, 36  
 Meginhard, bishop of Würzburg, 75–76  
 Merlin, 25  
 Mews, Constant J., 136 n. 45, 149  
 miracles, 10, 21, 23, 27–30, 37–39, 44, 47, 60 n. 10, 61, 68, 73, 81, 85, 118, 158, 164 n. 28, 166–74, 195  
 Montaigne, Michel de, 16 n. 4  
 Moore, R. I., 161  
 Morris, Colin, 76  
 Moses, 65, 94  
 Murray, Alexander, 13 n. 38  
  
 Nebuchadnezzar, 19 n. 13  
 Nile, 16, 112, 114  
 Norbert, saint, 168 n. 46  
  
 O'Neill, Onora, baroness, 202–04  
 oaths, 47–49, 53, 82  
 Odo of Soissons (later Ourscamp), 64, 131 n. 26, 142, 158  
 oracles, 23 n. 25, 25 n. 30, 36, 58, 189 n. 11  
 ordeal, 49–51  
 Osbert, archdeacon of Richmond (York), 52–54  
 Otloh von St Emmeram, 6, 35, 67–68, 75–81, 84–85, 89, 95, 103–04, 139 n. 57, 144 n. 74, 175 n. 69, 193  
 Otto von Freising, 10  
  
 palmistry, 18, 20  
*Parzifal*, 201



- Paul, apostle, 79, 93, 97–98, 105–06, 110–11, 126, 138
- penitentials, 18, 22, 96 n. 16, 117, 119–20
- Peter Abelard, 12, 13 n. 37, 57–61, 94 n. 11, 102, 104–06, 108, 110, 112, 114 n.74, 114 n. 75, 117–19, 122–24, 130 n. 20, 131 n. 27, 133 n. 33, 134, 136–53, 157, 161, 170 n. 52, 175 n. 68, 182, 194, 200
- Peter Alfonsi, 172 n. 60
- Peter Cantor, 52, 55
- Peter de St-Rémi, 38
- Peter Lombard, 3, 24, 61, 82, 95, 100, 102–04, 116, 119, 131, 144
- Peter of Blois, 65–66, 112 n. 70
- Peter of Bruys, 165
- Peter of Cornwall, 67, 86–89, 158
- Peter of Wakefield, 25
- Peter the Venerable, 158, 161, 164–75, 177, 181–83
- Peter, apostle, 58
- Phillipps, Sir Thomas, 83 n. 96
- Pierre Barthélemy, 45
- Play of Daniel*, 19 n. 13
- prayer, 9, 25–30, 33 n. 54, 34, 37, 43, 47, 50–51, 58, 68, 74, 76–77, 81, 83, 96, 99, 116, 165, 187
- pride, 95, 102–03, 166 n. 38, 173 n. 62
- Problemata Heloissae*, 57–61, 134, 136–37
- prophecy, 23–25, 27, 31–34, 43, 58, 64, 84, 93, 126, 166 n. 37, 170, 173–74, 178, 189
- Prudentius, 95
- Rainbert de Lille, 17–18
- Ralph of Fly, 124, 174 n. 66
- Rauschenbusch, Walter, 196
- Raymond le Gros, 48
- reason, 44, 65, 71, 81, 122, 131–33, 146, 150–53, 161, 170–71, 174–75, 195
- Reginald, prior of Wenlock, 187–88
- relics, 6 n. 18, 9–10, 33, 37 n. 69, 44, 47, 81, 83, 189
- Resurrection, 13, 70, 86 n. 109, 111, 121, 136, 153
- Reynolds, Susan, 1 n. 3, 10, 89 n. 121
- Richard I, king of England, 178–79
- Richard of St Victor, 35 n. 63, 59 n. 9, 81 n. 91, 153
- Richard, abbot, 40–41, 43
- Richard, earl, 48
- Robert of Béthune, bishop of Hereford, 40–43, 103–04, 186–88, 196 n. 30
- Roger of Howden, 179–81
- Rubin, Miri, 30 n. 46
- Rumunda, laysister of Kitzingen, 70
- Rupert von Deutz, 136, 152, 158
- Russell, Bertrand, 199, 201
- salvation, 23, 37, 57, 61, 68, 79, 89, 93–94, 96–97, 115, 123, 186
- Saracens, 165, 166 n. 38, 171, 173–74
- Schmitt, Jean-Claude, 158–59, 118 n. 87
- Shanley, Patrick, 202
- Siger de Conques, 47
- sin, 45, 58–60, 65, 78, 88 n. 119, 95 n. 14, 96, 100, 103–04, 112, 122, 136
- Smalley, Beryl, 82, 85, 139–40
- Smaragdus, grammarian, 92 n. 3
- Smith, Lee, 196–97
- soothsayers, 17–18, 20, 25, 31, 43–44, 52, 190
- sortilegium*, 18 n. 10, 19, 20 n. 14, 22–24, 50, 52 n. 116
- Southern R. W., 125, 127, 145 n. 78, 147 n. 82, 152 n. 107

- Speculum Virginum*, 60, 133 n. 34, 146 n. 81  
 Stephen, king of England, 52–53  
 Stump, Eleonore, 138 n. 54, 151 n. 105  
 suicide, 63 n. 21, 68–69, 75  
 Suskind, Ron, 198–99  
 Symphorian of York, 52–54
- Talmud, 172–73, 177 n. 73  
 temptation, 21 n. 18, 23, 27, 68, 73–74, 76–80, 100, 103–04, 147, 165  
 Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury, 52–53  
 Thomas Becket, saint, archbishop of Canterbury, 6, 8–9, 18–20, 22, 25, 35–39, 53 n. 119, 81–83, 89 n. 122, 97, 137, 176  
 Thomas of Beverley, 74  
 Thomas of Chobham, 119–20  
 Thomas, the apostle, 13, 97 n. 24  
 Three Kings of Cologne, 37  
 transubstantiation, 66, 115, 169 n. 48, 177, 194 n. 23  
 Trinity, 10, 18, 123, 131, 136, 143, 146, 152 n. 110, 153  
*tristitia*, 68–69  
 trust, 7, 17, 36, 38–40, 44, 67, 79, 95, 97–98, 102, 109–10, 114, 119 n. 89, 140, 190, 192, 195, 202–05
- Urbanus, bishop of Landaff, 41  
 Ursula, saint, 3, 5, 11–12, 26–27, 29, 32–33
- Vézelay, abbot of, 82  
 vices, 68 n. 37, 95–97, 100, 112, 201  
 Villers, monks of, 59 n. 9, 61–66, 134, 136, 141  
 Virgin Mary, 21 n. 18, 29–30, 43, 63, 72–73, 140 n. 59, 171  
 Volmar, 61, 64 n. 24
- Watkins, C.S., 88  
 Wezelin, nephew of Hildegard, 63  
 William Longchamp, 82  
 William of Newburgh, 54  
 William of Wycombe, 40–43, 188 n. 9  
 William, archbishop of York, 52  
 William, priest of York, 179 n. 80  
 Wilson, Angus, 5 n. 15  
 Witch of Endor, 19 n. 12  
 Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 199 n. 42  
 Wolfard, abbot of Albon, 72
- Yeats, William Butler, 201
- Zambia Mail*, 191–92





## DISPUTATIO

All volumes in this series are evaluated by an Editorial Board, strictly on academic grounds, based on reports prepared by referees who have been commissioned by virtue of their specialism in the appropriate field. The Board ensures that the screening is done independently and without conflicts of interest. The definitive texts supplied by authors are also subject to review by the Board before being approved for publication. Further, the volumes are copyedited to conform to the publisher's stylebook and to the best international academic standards in the field.

### Titles in Series

*Rhetoric and Renewal in the Latin West, 1100–1540: Essays in Honour of John O. Ward*, ed. by Constant J. Mews, Cary J. Nederman, and Rodney M. Thomson (2003)

*The Appearances of Medieval Rituals: The Play of Construction and Modification*, ed. by Nils Holger Petersen, Mette Birkedal Bruun, Jeremy Llewellyn, and Eyolf Østrem (2004)

*Speculum Sermonis: Interdisciplinary Reflection on the Medieval Sermon*, ed. by Georgiana Donavin, Cary J. Nederman, and Richard Utz (2004)

Ineke van 't Spijker, *Fictions of the Inner Life: Religious Literature and Formation of the Self in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (2004)

*Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pisan*, ed. by Karen Green and Constant J. Mews (2005)

Maria Dobozy, *Remembering the Present: The Medieval Poet-Minstrel in Cultural Context* (2005)

*The World of Marsilius of Pauda*, ed. by Gerson Moreno-Riaño (2006)

Jason Taliadoros, *Law and Theology in Twelfth-Century England: The Works of Master Vacarius (c. 1115/20–c. 1200)* (2006)

*What Nature Does Not Teach: Didactic Literature in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods*,  
ed. by Juanita Feros Ruys (2008)

## **In Preparation**

*'Sapientia et Eloquentia': Meaning and Function in Liturgical Poetry, Music, Drama, and Biblical Commentary in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Gunilla Iversen and Nicolas Bell

*John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts*, ed. by Malte Urban

James Blythe, *The Life and Works of Tolomeo Fiadoni (Ptolemy of Lucca)*

James Blythe, *The Worldview and Thought of Tolomeo Fiadoni (Ptolemy of Lucca)*



